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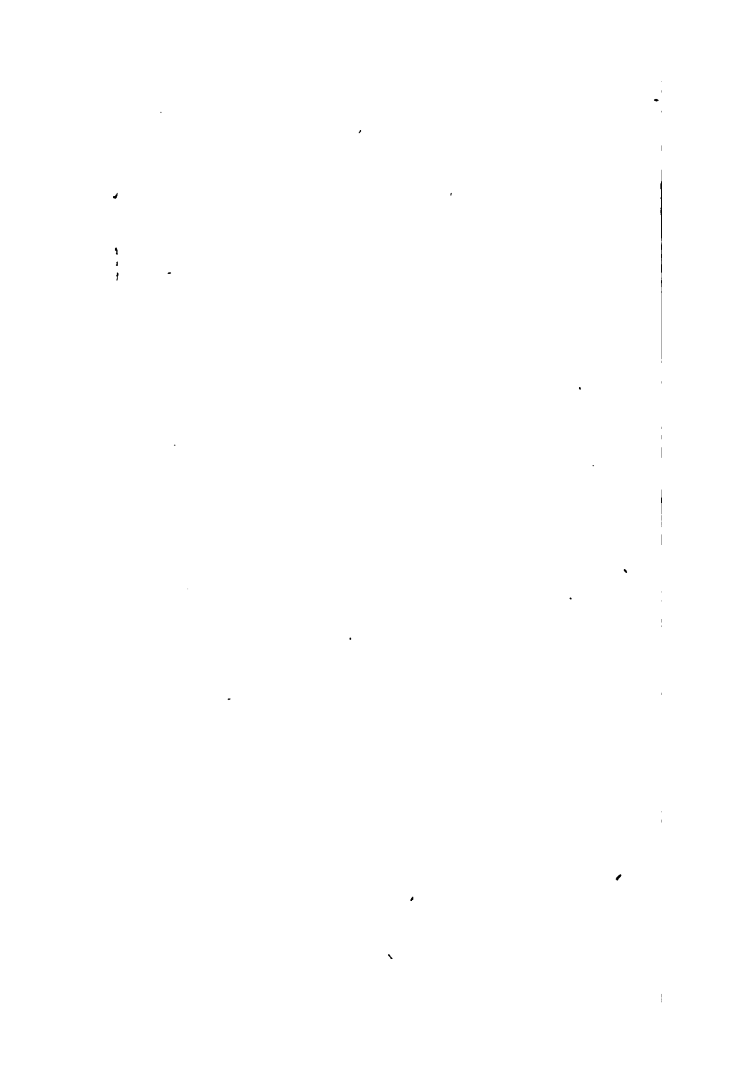
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THE CHRISTIAN TAUGHT BY THE
CHURCH'S SERVICES.



**"Such as are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish
in the courts of the house of our GOD."—PSALM xcii. 12.**

**"They will go from strength to strength, and unto the GOD
of gods appeareth every one of them in Sion."—PSALM
lxxxiv. 7.**

THE CHRISTIAN TAUGHT
BY THE CHURCH'S
SERVICES.

EDITED BY THE VERY REV.

WALTER FARQUHAR HOOK, D.D.,

DEAN OF CHICHESTER.

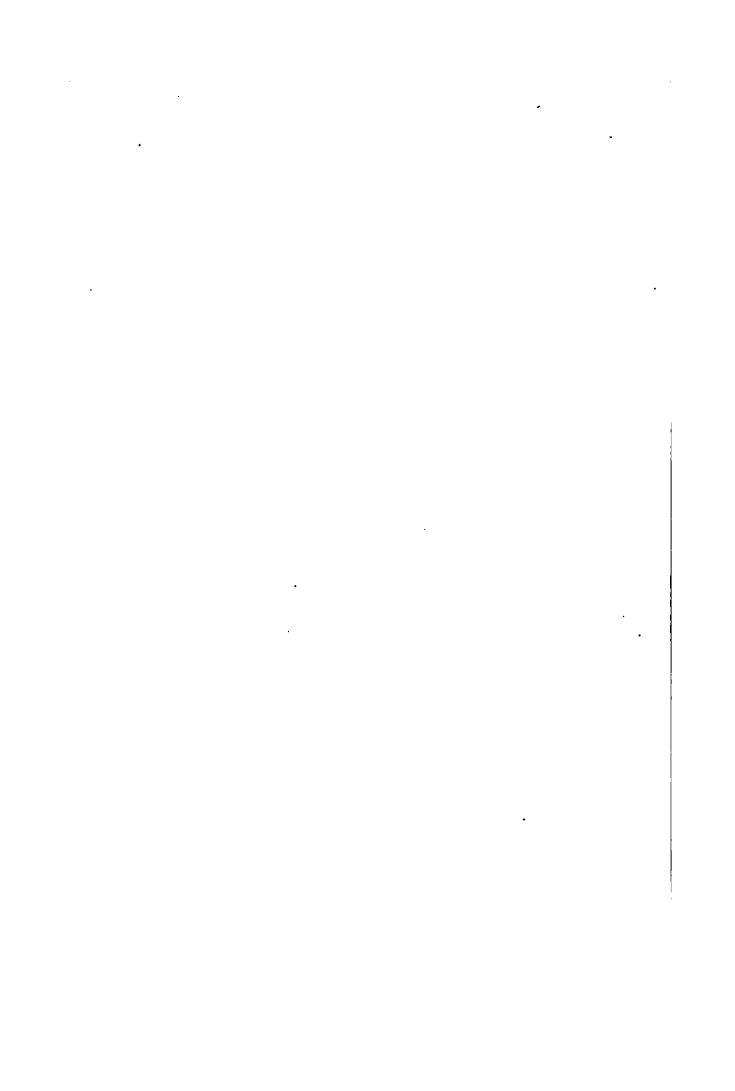
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NEW LECTIONARY.*



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1875.

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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.



THE object of this little work is best explained by its title. It was originally begun for the upper classes of a Sunday school, in order to prepare the children for the instruction which they were about to receive in church ; and it seemed to be so well calculated for general use, that the Editor requested permission to publish it in the *Devotional Library*.

Much had, indeed, been already written on the Sunday Services, in the way of remarks and explanations ; still, the writer felt a book was wanted which would make Christians feel the full value of the instruction which the Church has provided for them—which would teach them that her weekly services are not selected at random, but so arranged and connected that each individual may find in them a course of scriptural instruction suited to guide him gradually onward in the Christian life. It has therefore been the object of the writer of these pages so to set forth the teaching of the Church in each successive service, that every member of the Church may find in it a sermon addressed to himself.

In doing this, the writings of the most eminent Divines of our Church have of course been consulted, and their doctrine strictly adhered to.

It now only remains for the Editor to suggest that every part of the service for the day should be always carefully studied by teachers and young persons previously to using the following chapters; and to add, that if they are the means of bringing any fellow member into church with a mind more prepared to profit by the instruction provided for him there, the object in writing them will have been fully answered.

W. F. HOOK.

LEEDS,

December 1st, 1847.



ADVERTISEMENT TO THE
ALTERED EDITION OF 1875.

 HIS little work had a continued and increasing sale until the publication of the new Lectionary, when I received application from various quarters to adapt it to the altered circumstances of the Church services.

My literary engagements, added to my advanced time of life, rendered it impossible for me to undertake the work myself; but it has been carefully done by my son, the Rev. Cecil Hook, under my own general superintendence.

Although the corrections, emendations, and additions are necessarily very numerous, it has been the endeavour to leave the original production as far as possible untouched.

W. F. HOOK.

CHICHESTER,
July, 1875.



*THE CHRISTIAN TAUGHT BY THE
CHURCH'S SERVICES.*

PART I.

Advent.

13 **W**E were baptized into CHRIST's Church that we might be made inheritors of the kingdom of heaven; GOD thus mercifully placed us in the ark of His Church that in it we might be trained and prepared for the kingdom of GOD. It is, therefore, the object of the Church to set before us in order, out of Holy Scripture, the great truths which concern our salvation; and it is this office which she fulfils in the course of her yearly services.

From Advent to Trinity she sets before us the great work of our redemption through our Blessed Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. This period, which is called the doctrinal part of the year, is devoted to commemorate, by fast and festival, the several passages of His most holy life. Each of these His glorious actions, which we thus remember, is made to teach us some lesson or duty which

may be carried out by every one of us in our daily lives. Particular portions of Scripture are selected to help our meditations at these seasons, and proper prayers are chosen to assist our devotions. Thus by little and little is every part of Holy Scripture brought before us for our learning, and CHRIST's members are taught to be holy, even as He Which has called them is holy.

The name of the season on which we are now entering, Advent, signifies "coming," and the services draw our attention to the coming of our Blessed LORD upon earth; His coming in humility to work out our redemption, which is past; His future coming in glory to judge; and His spiritual coming to us now, according to His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Advent, then, is a season of contemplation, in which, while we prepare our minds and hearts to celebrate aright the festival of our LORD's first coming at Christmas, we are at the same time led to consider the means of preparation afforded to us for His second coming, and we are also reminded of His continued presence amongst us. The First Sunday speaks of personal preparation; the Second Sunday of preparation by means of the Holy Scriptures; the Third Sunday of the preparation of the world by the ministry of the Church; and the Fourth Sunday of preparation by the realization of CHRIST's presence with us now. May we be enabled so conscientiously to make use of this Holy Season and its teaching as to be more ready and fit to welcome our LORD when again He shall come amongst us as our Judge.

First Sunday in Advent.

Epistle, Romans, xiii. 8. *Morning Lesson*, Isaiah, i.
Gospel, St. Matthew, xxi. 1. *Evening Lesson*, Isaiah, ii. or
iv. 2.

N this Sunday we are in many ways urged to a more earnest preparation of our hearts for the dreadful Day of Judgment. The Epistle rouses us from our sleep of sin and sloth, telling us that "the day of the LORD is at hand;"¹ that "our salvation is nearer than when we believed;"² that is, that we are every hour making a nearer approach to that final day, to prepare us for which is the peculiar office of this season. Each evening finds us one day nearer to it than the preceding one left us,—each Advent brings us one year closer to the Coming of our LORD.

In the Gospel for this day, the awful moment is brought before us by type and figure,—in the Lessons by more direct prophecy. CHRIST's solemn entry into Jerusalem leads our minds onwards to the awful day when He shall come again to visit His Church. He then came in "great humility"³ "riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass;"⁴ but at the Last Day He shall come again "in His glorious majesty," "riding upon the wings of the wind." (Ps. xviii. 10.) Then He "came suddenly" (Mal. iii. 1) to His temple, to cast out from thence the profaners of the holy place.⁵ At the last day He will come at a time when we look not for Him, and at an hour when we are not aware,

¹ Verses 11, 12;

² verse 11.

³ Collect.

⁴ Gospel, verse 5;

⁵ verse 12.

to cast out from His heavenly kingdom all things that offend, and all that work iniquity. (St. Matt. xiii. 41.) Still more clearly does the prophet Isaiah speak to us of CHRIST's second Advent. He, of all the other prophets, is the one whom GOD chose to teach His people Israel of the coming and kingdom of the Messiah. His writings may, therefore, be considered as addressed to Christians no less than to Jews, and are appointed to be read at this season, to prepare the Christian Church for the coming of her LORD. The Lesson this morning opens with a loud call to repentance. The heavens and the earth are aroused¹ to listen and give ear while the LORD pleads with His people, setting before them their sins and His mercies. To awaken us still more effectually, the Evening Lesson brings before us, as in a picture, the terrible day of the LORD of Hosts, when men shall "hide themselves in the holes of the rocks, and in the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD and for the glory of His majesty."²

But if one part of this day's services would thus lead us to cry out with fear, "Who may abide the day of the LORD, and who may stand when He appeareth?"—the other reminds us that CHRIST has "come into the world to save sinners." If Isaiah speaks to us of the kingdom of glory, he speaks to us also of the kingdom of grace, which is to prepare us for it. To establish this kingdom of grace and to draw men into it, it was that "our LORD JESUS CHRIST came at this time to visit us in great humility."³ In His Blood it is that we are washed and made clean, and in His house that

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 2.

² Evening Lesson, verses 19-22.

³ Collect.

we are taught His ways and made to walk in His paths.¹

Let us, then, arise and "walk in the light of the LORD."² To enter into the full force of this expression, we must turn to the Collect and Epistle for the day. The latter teaches us how Christians who would be prepared to meet their GOD, must now "cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light;" and the former prays for grace to do so. The word "darkness" is used in Scripture to represent that state of ignorance and wickedness which prevailed in the world before the coming of CHRIST, (Is. ix. 2; Eph. v. 8,) and in which man still is by nature; therefore by "works of darkness" we are to understand those works of the devil, the world, and the flesh, which all baptized Christians have promised to renounce. But, as "darkness" is a fit emblem of our former state as children of wrath, so light is used to represent that state of salvation made known to the world by the Gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and applied to us individually at our baptism; therefore by the expression "armour of light" is signified that holiness, or sanctification, which, being the mark of all who have been called into that blessed state, is as necessary to them as soldiers of CHRIST, as common armour is to the soldiers of an earthly king. This holiness or sanctification is therefore described by St. Paul as composed of various duties, virtues, and graces, each of which are severally made to answer to the different parts of a warrior's armour. (See Eph. vi. 13, &c.) As the soldier's loins are girt about with armour, so must

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 16; Evening Lesson, verse 3; and alt. Evening Lesson, verse 4.

² Evening Lesson, verse 5.

our minds be built up and defended by the truths of the Gospel; we must put on righteousness as he does a breastplate; faith, as he does a shield; and as he uses a sword to repel the attacks of the enemy, so must we oppose the temptations of the devil by the Word of GOD. This, then, is the armour in which we must be clothed, if we would stand in the great and terrible day of the LORD. With our loins girt about and our lamps burning, we may spend "the time of this mortal life"¹ "in ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well;"² daily casting off the works of sin and wickedness which CHRIST came to destroy, and covering ourselves more and more closely with that garment of light and holiness with which He came to clothe us. Then in the day when, "in His glorious majesty" "He shall arise and shake terribly the earth,"³ we shall find in Him indeed "a place of refuge,"⁴ and with Him we may hope to "rise to the life immortal."

Having then first "washed us and made us clean"⁵ through His most precious Blood, He Who will come to be our Judge shall prove Himself to be our Saviour also; and the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious for them that are escaped of Israel.⁶

¹ Collect.

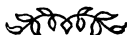
² Morning Lesson, verses 16, 17.

³ Evening Lesson, verses 19-21.

⁴ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 6.

⁵ Morning Lesson, verse 16.

⁶ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 2.



Second Sunday in Advent.

Epistle, Romans, xv. 4.
Gospel, St. Luke, xxi. 25.

Morning Lesson, Isaiah, v.
Evening Lesson, Isaiah, xi. to
verse 11, or xxiv.

THE services of this solemn season, while reminding us of CHRIST's first coming, and warning us of His second approach, also teach us the means by which we are to prepare for it. They tell us how He Who once came to dwell visibly amongst His people, now dwells invisibly, though not less surely, among them by His holy word and sacraments; that by His "still small voice" speaking to us in them, He may prepare us for the day when the sound of His terrible voice, calling us to judgment, shall shake "not the earth only, but also heaven." (Heb. xii. 26.) To-day, therefore, we have the warnings and promises of Holy Scripture plainly set before us, accompanied with directions for their use, and prayers for their right application. Let us then "see that we refuse not Him that speaketh," (Heb. xii. 25,) but now, "while the day of salvation lasteth," so read and profit by His holy word, that at the awful day of His second appearing we may be found "wise unto salvation," through JESUS CHRIST.

To make the study of GOD's word profitable, it must be accompanied by devout and earnest meditation. The Collect teaches us the necessity of this duty, and shows us the steps by which to arrive at its performance. First, by "marking" what we "hear" or "read:" with our minds disengaged from every other thought, we must observe

every circumstance which the Spirit of GOD has recorded for our profit, turning it over in our minds, and seeking how best to apply it to our own case. By this means we shall not fail to "learn"¹ our duty,—but even then, we must not be satisfied until this knowledge of our duty has been carried out into decided resolutions and active obedience; for these, like the health and strength of our natural bodies, are the only proofs by which we know that the food has been "inwardly digested"¹ in our souls.

Diligent and devout study of the Bible, such as this, will produce in us that patience and blessed "hope"² which the Epistle describes; for he who reads the Holy Scriptures, not as a mere history, but remembering that "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning," will see in all GOD'S dealings something which may be taken home to himself, and so be to him like GOD'S voice, teaching him and telling him what he ought to do. In the deliverance of GOD'S saints, he will find encouragement and comfort, and the warnings and judgments of the Almighty will cause him to watch and fear. The prophecies of the Old Testament he will look upon, not as empty words and figures suited only to the Jewish people, but he will see in them the promise of a Saviour, Who was to "confirm to the Gentiles all the promises made unto the fathers,"³ and for Whose coming we at this time rejoice and glorify GOD.

The portions of Scripture provided for this day will, if applied according to this rule, be found most suitable for the season for which they are appointed.

¹ Collect. ² Epistle, verse 4; ³ verses 8, 9, 10.

When, in the prophecies of Isaiah, we read the threats of destruction denounced against impenitent nations, we must remember that they are also typical and prophetic of the judgment which will one day come upon the whole world ; and that the sins mentioned as having caused their fall are, therefore, those against which we must especially watch and guard.¹ When we read the warnings spoken to the house of Israel, under the figure of the unprofitable vineyard,² and then see how awfully they were brought to pass in the destruction of Jerusalem, prophetically described by our LORD Himself in the Gospel of the day,³ we must remember that what was spoken to the Jewish Church is also addressed to the Christian ; and what has been fulfilled once in the destruction of Jerusalem, is but a shadow of the destruction in store for impenitent sinners at the Last Day. The Church of CHRIST is now the vineyard of the Almighty ; He has "fenced"⁴ it outwardly with discipline, and rules, and ordinances, and inwardly with sacraments and Holy Scripture, and with other means of grace. Surely, then, as He visited the Jewish vineyard for its unprofitableness, so will He also visit us, if these great privileges do not bring forth in us the fruits of holiness and true devotion. The true Vine is "the Rod of Jesse,"⁵ referred to in the Evening Lesson. Grafted into Him we may share those sevenfold gifts of the Spirit⁶ which are spoken of in the Confirmation service as the heritage of the members of Christ. Thus united in the one LORD, the one faith, the one baptism, it is our privilege as well as

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 20, &c. and alt. Evening Lesson.

² Morning Lesson ;

³ verse 24 ;

⁴ verse 2, &c.

⁵ Evening Lesson, verse 1 ;

⁶ verses 2, 3.

our duty as members of the LORD's vineyard not only to learn from the book of His Word, what He hath done on our behalf; but to spread the joyful news to others, both by our efforts and our example, until "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."¹ This alone—this study and this labour—will bring peace to the soul amidst "the perplexities"² of life; this alone can bring peace among men; peace such as that prophesied of by Isaiah,³ which now, indeed, in its fulness, passeth knowledge, but which shall one day be realized in the "glorious rest"⁴ of heaven. Seeing, then, how plainly GOD's word sets these things before us for our profit, let us not, by careless reading or inattention, incur the guilt of "breaking the everlasting covenant,"⁵ but let us employ this holy season in earnestly meditating upon them, with humble prayer to Almighty GOD, that the words which He thus vouchsafes to speak to us, may bring forth in us the "fruit of good living,"⁶ that so in the dreadful Day of Judgment,⁷ when "the earth shall be dissolved,"⁸ when "the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed,"⁹ we may stand before "the great white throne," strong in our SAVIOUR's strength, strong in the blessed hope of everlasting life,¹⁰ made fit at last to reign in the heavenly Jerusalem, in the presence of the LORD and of His glory, for ever.¹¹

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 9.² Gospel, verse 25.³ Evening Lesson, verses 6-9;⁴ verse 10.⁵ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 5.⁶ Collect.⁷ Alt. Evening Lesson, verses 18-23;⁸ verse 19;⁹ verse 23.¹⁰ Collect.¹¹ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 23.

Third Sunday in Advent.

Epistle, 1 Corinthians, iv. 1. *Morning Lesson*, Isaiah, xxv.
Gospel, St. Matthew, xi. 2. *Evening Lesson*, Isaiah, xxvi.
or xxviii. 5-19.



LMIGHTY GOD speaks to us through His holy Church and ministers, as well as in His Holy Word. He brings us now into His Church militant, that in it He may train and prepare us for His coming in the Church triumphant. This is what the services for this Third Sunday in Advent would teach us. They point out to us the office of the Church, and of those who rule in it; they teach us our duties and privileges in it;¹ and show us how the blessings of CHRIST's kingdom of grace are to prepare us for the far higher blessings of His kingdom of glory.²

The word *steward* as used in the Gospel and Collect of the day exactly explains the office and power of the ministers of CHRIST upon earth. A steward is one who in the absence of his master has received power to rule his house and to dispense his goods. His own circumstances may perhaps be no better or higher than those of many of his fellow-servants (see *Ember Days*), but the commission he has received entitles him to respect, for his master's sake, and any want of respect shown to him would surely be a want of respect shown to the master who sent him. CHRIST's ministers are the stewards whom He has set over "His household," (St. Matt. xxiv. 45,) the Church, now that He has withdrawn His visible presence. As the successors of those whom CHRIST sent in His Father's Name, (St. John, xx. 21,) they have power to admit men into His household, and to dispense to them the out-

¹ Collect and Epistle.

² Proper Lessons.

ward signs through which the riches of His grace are conveyed. To them, also, is committed the care of teaching "line upon line, precept upon precept,"¹ the whole will of the great High Priest, JESUS CHRIST our LORD. They may indeed teach with "stammering lips and imperfect wisdom,"² but they are the messengers of the LORD, they bear His commission, are the channels of His grace, and through them we may come to Him as those Greeks of old sought and found the LORD in the Temple, by means of the Apostolic fisherman.³

The office of CHRIST's ministers now, like that of John the Baptist before our LORD's first Advent, is to "make ready a people prepared for the LORD." To his life, therefore, the Gospel for this day refers us.⁴ We here read how he sent his disciples to CHRIST for the confirmation of his doctrine and the strengthening of their own faith. So it is with the ministers of CHRIST now. The end and object of their teaching is only to lead us to our Blessed LORD, and to join us more closely to Him. They preach to us out of those Scriptures which show that He is "the CHRIST." They call us to repentance, that we may be brought to our Saviour and receive remission of sins in His Name. They lead us to Him in prayer; they teach us to do His will that we may know more of His doctrine, and so walk more closely with Him; and they administer to us those holy sacraments by which He chooses to "dwell in us, and we in Him."

To those who are so brought to Him, our LORD will disclose Himself more and more. He will open their eyes and ears to understand the wondrous things of His law;⁵ He will cleanse them from the leprosy of wickedness, and raise them

¹ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 10;

² verse 11.

³ St. John, xii. 21-23. ⁴ verse 2, &c. ⁵ Gospel, v. 4.

from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness.¹

The Epistle teaches us how we are to treat those through whom we receive such high and holy privileges. Looking upon them as the ambassadors of CHRIST, we are to esteem them very highly for their work's sake. (1 Thes. v. 13.) Instead of setting ourselves up as judges of their conduct,² we are told to think of the day when both ministers and people shall stand before the judgment-seat of CHRIST,—the former to give an account of their stewardship, the latter of the talents committed to their charge. As no fault in our ministers can now make void their commission, so no fault of theirs will in that day excuse us for having wasted the gifts it conveyed.

In accordance with the rest of this day's services, the Morning Lesson contains a hymn addressed by the Church and its members to their Redeemer. CHRIST's people are represented as dwelling in a secure mountain,³ supported and nourished by the good things He has provided for them,⁴ and waiting for the more complete manifestation of His presence.⁵ To all such as are thus living with Him in His kingdom of grace, He is said to be a light and defence, so that to them death itself shall not be a terror, nor our SAVIOUR's coming in glory an object of fear.⁶ But lest we should be inclined to rest on our privileges, or think ourselves too secure, because through GOD's mercy we have been admitted into His holy mountain, the Evening Lesson teaches us that our heart and spirit must go along with our outward profession. We must not be content with having been baptized into CHRIST's visible Church, or believing that "He will come to be our Judge,"

¹ Gospel, v. 5. ² Epistle, v. 5. ³ Morn. Less. v. 6, 7;
⁴ verse 6; ⁵ verses 8, 9. ⁶ Evening Lesson.

but we must be looking out for Him ; with our spirit within us we must "seek Him early,"¹ must "wait for Him in the way of His judgments," and the desire of our souls must be unto His Name. If at any time we have been tempted astray out of "His strong city,"² His sure refuge, we must not rest satisfied until we have discovered what "other Lords"³ (that is, what bad passions or strong temptations), have had dominion over us, and until we have returned unto the LORD our GOD with deepest penitence and fervent prayer. It is to those of His members who are waiting for Him in His holy mountain, that our LORD addresses the gracious promises contained in the last verses of this Lesson ; where He assures them that their dead bodies shall be raised to life through their union with His Body, and that "when He shall come out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, they shall be hid and protected until the shadow of His indignation be over-passed."⁴

This day, on which we are taught the merciful provision and protection afforded us in CHRIST'S Church, is also very appropriately chosen as the time to offer up prayers for its welfare. During the ensuing Ember Week all the members of CHRIST are commanded to implore GOD'S blessing on the ministers of CHRIST; and the people committed to their charge. For the former, we pray that they may rightly dispense GOD'S manifold gifts of grace ; for the latter, that they may not only receive them, but have grace to use them to His honour and glory ; that so all the inhabitants of GOD'S holy mountain, dwelling together in unity of spirit, and in the bond of peace, may be found a people acceptable in His sight,—prepared to meet their GOD.

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 8 ;

² verse 13 ;

³ verses 1, 2 ;

⁴ verses 19-21.

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

Epistle, Philippians, iv. 4. *Morning Lesson*, Isaiah, xxx.
to verse 27.

Gospel, St. John, i. 19. *Evening Lesson*, Isaiah, xxxii.
or xxxiii. 2-23.

WE have now to close the Advent services, and prepare for the holy festival of our Blessed LORD's Nativity. On this day, then, the three Advents of our LORD are distinctly brought before us. We welcome His first coming as our Saviour,¹—we look for His second coming as our Judge,²—and we pray that by His inward spiritual coming amongst us now, He may prepare our souls to meet Him.³

How entirely we depend upon this His invisible Advent and Presence with us, it is the object of this day's services to teach us. The great GOD of heaven and earth did indeed come down as at this time from heaven to procure for us a crown of glory at His second appearing, but He will give it only to those who so run that they may obtain it; therefore does the Collect liken us to men who run a race to obtain an earthly crown. We know how diligently they would put away everything that would hinder their progress, and so prevent them from obtaining the wished-for prize: with equal diligence should we put away those sins and wickednesses which hinder us in our Christian course, and may altogether prevent us from obtaining the salvation which our Blessed Saviour holds out to us. We know, also, how careful the runners would be to keep their bodies in temperance and subjection,

¹ Gospel, verses 26, 27. ² Epistle, verse 5. ³ Collect.

always in a fit state for action, should their time of trial come suddenly or unexpectedly, (see 1 Cor. ix. 24.)—so does the Epistle enjoin upon us the virtue of moderation, bidding us to remember that “the LORD is at hand ;”¹ it teaches us that while we rejoice in the prospect of the prize, and in the LORD Who offers it, we must be careful to keep our hopes and affections fixed upon it, not letting them be entangled with earthly things, but standing as those who “wait for the coming of their LORD.” We know, however, how fruitless would have been all their precautions, had not the runners had bodily strength given them of GOD,—so neither can we win our race, unless GOD be with us by His mighty power to succour and defend us. It is to obtain this mighty aid that we have lately been led to GOD’s appointed means of grace. (Second and Third Sundays in Advent.) Prayers, Holy Scriptures, and Holy Sacraments, are intended to secure to our souls the invisible though powerful Advent and Presence of CHRIST. Unless, therefore, by our devout use of them, we have gained this blessing, they will be unprofitable to us ; we can neither hope rightly to commemorate His first, nor joyfully to hail His second, Advent. How appropriate, then, is the petition of the Collect, that He Who came among us to deliver us from the punishment of our sins, would now come among us to deliver us from their power, so that they may not hinder His gracious purposes towards us.²

We see in the Morning Lesson how the Jewish people made light of the salvation offered to them by GOD ; turning away from the LORD Who bought them, “to trust in the shadow of Egypt.”³

¹ Epistle, verse 5.

² Collect.

³ Morning Lesson, verse 2.

Under this figure is represented to us the constant propensity of GOD's people to turn back to the world and its temptations ; and by it would the Church warn us, on this day, to "cast off our sins and wickedness," and follow in the way of Him Who came to save us. To such as, on the contrary, do not turn aside out of the right path, but cast away everything that would lead them astray, are addressed the promises made by the "Holy One of Israel."¹ For them the LORD "waits that He may be gracious."² Though He should give them the "bread of adversity and water of affliction,"³ yet it is only that He may lead them safely to the attainment of that salvation which He has in store for them. He will "bind up the breach of His people, and heal the stroke of their wounds."⁴ He will preserve them from their spiritual foes, as He saved Israel from the hosts of Assyria, an event referred to in the alternative Evening Lesson.

Though enemies within and without assail the Church, yet shall she remain strong in the foundation stone of CHRIST, and her "Tabernacle shall not be taken down ;"⁵ for "the LORD is our King, He shall save us,"⁶ and in His good time they who are truly His "shall see the King in His beauty."⁷

Still more does the Evening Lesson confirm and strengthen our faith in the mighty salvation which has been wrought for us ; for here the union of the divine and human Natures in the Person of our LORD JESUS CHRIST (which is the ground of all our hopes) is prophetically spoken of. Here we

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 15, &c. ;

² verse 18 ;

³ verse 20 ;

⁴ verse 26.

⁵ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 20 ;

⁶ verse 22 ;

⁷ verse 17.

behold Him as a King, reigning in righteousness, and as a Man, our refuge and hiding-place.¹

The happy and saving effects of His second Advent are foretold,² and warnings and denunciations are proclaimed against those who live in ease, careless and regardless of the salvation which He has purchased for them.³

In the Gospel⁴ we have the testimony of St. John the Baptist to the divinity of our Blessed LORD, as a suitable subject with which to conclude our preparation for Christmas-day. So are we taught to bear in mind, that He Who was born in the manger at Bethlehem is none other than the great and mighty GOD, Who is able as well as willing to save to the uttermost those who come to Him. He came down from heaven for us men and for our salvation. Even now He "stands among us,"⁵ though we see Him not, succouring and defending us in our Christian course,⁶ and He will enable us to finish it with joy, if only we lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us. (Heb. xii. 1.)

¹ Evening Lesson verses 1, 2;

² verse 9.

³ verse 26.

⁴ verse 15, &c.;

⁵ Gospel, verse 19;

⁶ Collect.



Christmas-day.

Epistle, Hebrews, i. 1.

Gospel, St. John, i. 1.

Psalms, xix., xlv., lxxv.,
lxxxix., cx., cxxxii.

Morning Lessons, Isaiah, ix.
1-8; St. Luke, ii. 1-15.

Evening Lessons, Isaiah, vii.
10-17; Titus, iii. 4-9.

TO-DAY the Church wakes up our most joyful songs of praise and thanksgiving, for to-day she brings us good tidings of great joy! During the last four weeks she has been showing to us the terrors of the LORD, and so making us feel our need of a Saviour; she has been teaching us that GOD's infinite justice must be satisfied, but that for this satisfaction no human sacrifice can be sufficient,—“no man may deliver his brother, or make agreement unto GOD for him.” To-day, she tells us of One born into the world, Who, being GOD to save, as well as Man to suffer, is able to make that perfect sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, which our sins had required. Thus it is upon the doctrine of the union of the divine and human Natures in the Person of our Blessed SAVIOUR that we found all our hopes; and it is this doctrine which the Church would especially teach us on Christmas-day; for while we celebrate His coming in the flesh as perfect Man, the services remind us that He is also perfect GOD.

Let us, then, in humble devotion, and with the deepest reverence, follow the teaching of Holy Scripture on this point, remembering that though the Incarnation of our LORD (*i. e.* GOD being made flesh) is a mystery far above our understanding, yet

It is an article of our Creed which every one of us must receive by faith.

In the portion of Scripture appointed for the Epistle, St. Paul unfolds to us this mystery. He tells us, that He Whom we call the Son of GOD existed with the Father before the foundation of the world,¹ and therefore He is Eternal; that He was appointed heir of all things,² and that by Him the worlds were made; therefore He is Almighty. The apostle would also make known to us His perfect union with the divine Nature, for he calls Him "the brightness of His Father's glory;" and we know that the brightness which proceeds from any great light, must be of the same nature as the light itself; and then by immediately afterwards speaking of the Son as an "image" or resemblance of the Father, he would go on to teach us that with this unity of Nature there is also a distinction of Persons.³ Again, in the adoration of the heavenly hosts, we have an additional proof of the glory and majesty of the Divine Person.⁴

The same truth is again declared to us by St. John in that portion of his Gospel appointed for this day. In the former part of it, the Son of GOD, or second Person of the Holy Trinity, is called "the Word," which title was never applied by the Jews to any but to the Divine Being. He is said to have been from the beginning "with GOD;" to be indeed "very GOD," and to have proved Himself to be so, by the exertion of divine power as the Creator of all things.⁵ So is the perfect Godhead of our Blessed LORD abundantly revealed to us. His perfect Manhood is as fully shown to us in the latter part of this Scripture,

Epistle, verse 2 :
verse 6.

² verse 2 ; ³ verse 3 ;
⁴ Gospel, verse 10 ;

where we read that "the Word" was made flesh, and dwelt among us,¹ losing nothing of His own glory, though partaking of our nature and infirmities. Thus by the infinite mercy of GOD were the divine and human Natures united in one Person, that man might trust in a Saviour, Who is at once human to suffer, and divine to save.

And not only by revelation, but also by prophecy is JESUS CHRIST preached to us this day. The Lessons from Isaiah, read to us both morning and evening, though written seven hundred and fifty years before the birth of our Saviour, describe to us the character, attributes, and nature of that divine Person, Who, as on this day, was born into the world. The first five verses speak of the light and joy which should attend His coming,² and figuratively describe His perfect victory over sin and the devil.³ Then we read of His wonderful birth, and mysterious names. We hear Him called "Child" of man, yet "Son" of GOD, governing all things—Son of GOD, yet also Himself the mighty GOD, the everlasting Father. Rightly, then, is He called "Wonderful," Whose nature is so awfully mysterious; "Counsellor," because He is the very Wisdom and Word of GOD; and "Prince of Peace," is a name well suited to Him Who came to "make peace" for us, Who both gave us and left us His peace. (St. John, xiv. 27.) In the Evening Lesson, the manner of His birth, and the history of the Incarnation, are clearly foretold. The former in that verse which proclaims Him "Son of the Virgin"—the latter, in that one word "Emmanuel"—GOD with us."⁴

The Proper Psalms are selected to set forth, by

¹ Gospel, verse 14.

² Morning Lesson, verse 2 ;

³ verses 4, 5.

⁴ Evening Lesson, verse 14.

type and prophecy, the birth of the Divine Saviour, and also to raise our minds in praise and thanksgiving for the mercies of this blessed day.

The nineteenth Psalm is a description of the glorious firmament of heaven, and of the sun and stars which GOD has placed there. In Holy Scripture the natural world is often made to represent the spiritual world, and things seen are put to teach us of things unseen. This Psalm, therefore, speaks to us of the Sun of Righteousness, Who, as on this day, rose over a dark and ignorant world;¹ at Whose birth a new star appeared, and Whose Gospel, like the light, spread itself into every corner of the earth.

The forty-fifth Psalm was originally sung in honour of King Solomon, and of his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter. Christians, on this day, sing it in honour of their Heavenly King, and of His union with the Church His spouse. In this Psalm our LORD'S appearance in the flesh is described.² Then the successful propagation of His Gospel and perfect victory over His enemies are foretold.³ Lastly,⁴ the gathering in of the Gentile Churches (who are represented under the image of "King's daughters") is prophesied of, and their united chorus of praise and thanksgiving ends the Psalm.

The eighty-fifth Psalm speaks of the Incarnation of CHRIST, the benefits it brought into the world, and of the manner in which we should apply them to ourselves. Thus, it is through the Incarnation of our LORD JESUS CHRIST that our offence is forgiven,⁵ and GOD'S anger is "made to cease"⁶ from us; so that "mercy and truth meet together—righteousness and peace kiss each other." But

¹ Psalm xix. 5, 6.

⁴ verses 10-18.

² Psalm xlv. 3;

⁵ Psalm lxxv. 7: ⁶ verse 4.

³ verses 4-9;

that these blessings may be ours, so must each one of us be turned to Him, and each one of us must pray : "Show us Thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us Thy salvation."¹

The promises made to David and to his seed in the eighty-ninth Psalm, refer to Him of Whom David was the type, and in Him to us His members. To-day, then, on which we celebrate the coming of the true David, do we very fitly glorify GOD for the blessed promises we enjoy through Him.

The one hundred and tenth Psalm is a prophetic description of the kingdom and glories of the Messiah. In it is an allusion to His human nature which well suits the character of this day's festival. It was in the human nature which He this day took upon Him, that "He drank of the brook" of affliction,² that human nature might lift up its head. He came to suffer as Son of Man, that man might be glorified as Son of GOD.

The one hundred and thirty-second Psalm, which is the last of those selected for this day, contains the promise made to David that "of the fruit of his body, He would set upon his seat."³ This promise, though first fulfilled in Solomon, as a type, met with its real and high accomplishment when the shepherds of Bethlehem Ephratah proclaimed the birth of the King of kings. Thus may we on this day use this Psalm, saying in its very words, "Lo, we have heard of the same at Ephratah, and found it in the wood."⁴

Having now contemplated our Saviour in His divine nature as GOD of GOD, Light of Light, and very GOD of very GOD, we turn to the narrative of

¹ Psalm lxxv. 7.

² Psalm cx. 7.

³ Psalm cxxxii. 12.

⁴ verse 6; and Micah, v. 2.

His birth, as read to us in the Second Lesson for this morning. We shall now be prepared to join in the angels' hymn, and then with less danger of irreverence, shall we venture to look upon Him as a little child, subject to the pains, and sorrows, and infirmities of our nature. With our minds filled with the thought of His divinity, the contemplation of Him in infancy and weakness will only add to our wonder and adoration at the infinite love which could stoop so low for our salvation, and we shall be ready to exclaim, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all the benefits which He hath done unto me?"

The Services of this day give the answer.

CHRIST, they teach us, was born in the flesh, that we might be born again in the spirit;¹ therefore, by striving daily to grow in our new and spiritual life, shall we best show forth our gratitude to Him Who gave it.

As CHRIST, when He had been born in the flesh, grew up to manhood in His new and human nature, so we, who have been born again by the washing of regeneration in Holy Baptism,² must daily grow in our sanctified nature by the renewing of the HOLY GHOST. Day by day, and little by little, must each member of CHRIST strive to mortify all those evil and corrupt affections which come from his old nature, and to grow in all the holy thoughts and good resolutions which are the fruits of his new birth, praying, in the words of the Collect, that the Holy Spirit would assist him in this great work. So may we hope that the fulness of the blessings brought to us on Christmas-day, may shed itself over our whole lives; that having received "power to become the sons of GOD," through the

¹ Collect. ² Second Evening Lesson, verses 4, 5.

First Sunday after Christmas. 25

mercy of Him Who, as on this day, became Son of Man,¹ we may be daily renewed in the image of Him that created us, until we come to the "measure of the stature of the fulness of CHRIST."

ST. STEPHEN'S DAY.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST'S DAY.

THE INNOCENTS' DAY.²



First Sunday after Christmas.

Epistle, Galatians, iv. i. *Morning Lesson*, Isaiah, xxxv.
Gospel, St. Matthew, i. 18. *Evening Lesson*, Isaiah, xxxviii.
or xl.

THE day is not sufficient to celebrate the glorious festival of CHRIST'S Nativity. The whole forty days which succeed, in some measure keep up a spirit of holy and joyous gratitude; but the octave, or eight days after Christmas-day, and the Sunday which falls within it, are most especially set apart for meditating on CHRIST'S Incarnation, and the benefits we derive from it as adopted children of GOD.

Again on this day does the Gospel relate to us the mysterious narrative of CHRIST'S Birth. In it do we find the accomplishment of the prophecies read to us on Christmas-day. By the mighty power of GOD, the Son of GOD becomes Son of Man—GOD made flesh; and dwells among us, redeeming and sanctifying His people, and in His very Name bringing salvation.³

¹ Gospel, verse 12. ² See among Saints' days.

³ Gospel, verse 21.

The Epistle explains to us, by a type or figure, the blessed change which passed upon mankind at the Birth of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Before that time the Church of GOD had been in bondage under the ceremonies and ordinances of the Jewish dispensation. Like an heir, who is not yet come to the enjoyment of his possessions, it knew not the fulness of its privileges,¹ for it saw CHRIST as through a glass darkly, through types and by figures; and, like a slave, whose service is one of hard tasks and great severity, it had been forced to obey, by severe penalties, painful rites and burdensome institutions. Only when JESUS CHRIST was born into the world were GOD's people released from this hard bondage, and translated into the "glorious liberty of the children of GOD." By Himself obeying all the ordinances of the law, and suffering what was due to them as breakers of the law, He redeemed them from its curse, and became the "end of the law for righteousness to all them that believe." From servants they became sons; and, from holding their heavenly inheritance under tutors and governors, they became "heirs of GOD through CHRIST."² Well, therefore, may we hail with joy and gratitude unspeakable the day which brought Him down from heaven, giving light and life unto the world, bringing "peace on earth, and good-will to men."

But the Collect goes on to teach us how He Whose infinite mercy bestowed such blessings on the world in general, has provided means whereby each one of His servants may apply them to himself.

The holy Sacrament of Baptism, by which we were regenerated or born again, has made us mem-

¹ Epistle, verses 2, 3 ;

² verse 7.

bers of CHRIST, and therefore children of GOD, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Every one whom GOD has brought into His Church by Baptism, has then a part in the benefits of CHRIST'S Incarnation, and may call himself by no less a title than the adopted son of GOD. He is taken into GOD'S family, trained up under His care, and "daily renewed"¹ and sustained by that other sacrament and those other means of grace which convey the Holy Spirit into the hearts of GOD'S adopted children.

This is the thought which the Church would have with us at this holy season ; and, as it is one which even the youngest of her members may bring home to himself, let us each strive to improve it to the best of our power.

Let us realize to ourselves the high privilege of having been adopted into the family of GOD,—of being permitted to call Him our Father, and to come to Him in all our wants and difficulties, through His Son, our Saviour, JESUS CHRIST.

But, amidst our blessings and our privileges, we must not forget our duties and our dangers. Those who share the rights and advantages of a family, must also bear a part in its common duties, and join in resisting its common enemies ; so it is with the children of GOD. Having "received the adoption of sons,"² their obedience is required by GOD under the Gospel as it was under the law, only it must be more willing and cheerful,—as the obedience of a son is more willing and cheerful than that of a slave. And in their obedience they will meet with difficulties, and even with dangers. The devil, who is the common enemy of GOD, and of His adopted

¹ Collect.

² Epistle, verse 5.

children, thinks no member of CHRIST too small or insignificant to be the object of his attacks. "Like a roaring lion, he ever goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." Therefore, all the children of GOD must stand fast in the faith; they must quit them like men, and be strong, continually watching and praying, and resisting his temptations. We must "resist the devil, and he will flee from us."

The Evening Lesson points, through the example of Hezekiah, to the fact, that our Heavenly Father is equally careful of His children. He sympathises with their individual temptations and sufferings, and is ever ready to hear their prayers, and to grant them if, to His all-seeing wisdom, the granting of the request be good for the petitioner.

Christmas-tide reminds us, year by year, of this care of GOD for His own, of this willingness to answer our prayers, of this tender sympathy shown even more towards us, than towards the good King of Israel; for to us is the revelation sure that we are "GOD's children" through CHRIST JESUS, and that "whatsoever we ask the Father in His name He will give it."¹ Happy shall we be if the knowledge of these things stir up in us a feeling of gratitude such as that which opened the mouth of Hezekiah in his glorious hymn of praise, and which may add truer fervour and depth to our songs of praise and thanksgiving when we enter the House of the Lord.²

The Morning Lesson and the alternative Evening Lesson speak of the comfort and strength imparted by the Gospel of peace to the wanderers in the wilderness of ignorance or of sin.³ From the manger

¹ St. John, xvi. 23.

² Evening Lesson, verse 20.

³ Morning Lesson, verse 1.

of Bethlehem we carry away the knowledge of our Great High Priest as touched with a feeling of our infirmities.

Our LORD took our nature upon Him that He might tread before us the highway of life ;¹ in His footsteps we must tread along the way of holiness. What if the path be hard ! (He hath warned us of the narrow way) ; it leads straight onward to the land of peace where sorrow and sighing shall flee away,² and those wearied with a life-long struggle will at last find rest. And as along that highway we pass, following our LORD, we may indeed feel the holiest confidence in our Guide ; more tender and long-suffering than the kindest of gentle Eastern shepherds to His sheep,³ more powerful to aid in danger than any *man*, for He is the Creator of the Universe.⁴ "Therefore strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. Be strong, fear not."⁵ They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their⁶ strength.

Grant, O LORD, that we being Thy children, may daily be renewed by Thy Holy Spirit.⁷

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 8 ;

² verse 10.

³ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 11 ;

⁴ verses 12-31.

⁵ Morning Lesson, verses 3, 4.

⁶ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 31.

⁷ Collect.



the tale of the shepherds, and in her humble mind she stored up this fresh confirmation of her highest hopes.¹ Thus from the Gospel we learn the two-fold manner in which we are to receive aright the merciful revelations of GOD. We are to gather them together and make them the subject of thankful prayerful meditation, while we go forth and show to others our faith, in the holiness and the piety of our lives. In such a spirit let us proceed to a few thoughts suggested by the Lessons of the day.

The Morning Lesson directs our attention to a distinct prophecy of our LORD, bringing out most clearly that obedience which is the particular subject of our thoughts and prayers² at this season. This chapter, in some of the oldest versions of the Bible, is headed, "Prophecy concerning CHRIST the LORD," and the Jews always added the word "Messiah" to the opening passage; "Behold my servant³ *Messiah*." We do right, therefore, in seeking, under the words of this prophecy, the teaching of the HOLY GHOST concerning the office and ministry of the HOLY SON. The first words take up the key-note of the season. The Messiah is also the obedient servant;⁴ for He, being GOD, humbled Himself at the will of the Father and became "inferior to Him as touching His manhood,"⁵ that He might work out that will from the manger of Bethlehem to the Cross of Calvary, when with His last breath He could declare, "It is finished." The Almighty then goes on to proclaim, through His prophet, the manner of Messiah's work and the nature of His commission.

¹ Gospel, verse 19.

² Collect.

³ Morning Lesson, verse 1;

⁴ verse 1, and Phil. ii. 5-7.

⁵ Athanasian Creed.

CHRIST the anointed of the Holy Spirit,¹ to-become the judge of all the world, was also JESUS the Saviour of mankind, both Jew and Gentile. The gentleness of the Saviour² is contrasted with the justice of the Judge;³ the yearning of the Messiah towards His people, disobedient though they be, and prisoners of sin, with the fierce wrath of GOD on the wilfully and persistently disobedient. The next chapter reverts again to peace and love as though that were far more beauteous in the sight of GOD than even retributive justice, for are not we His children, precious in His sight?⁴ Yes, though we have wearied Him with our sins, though we have brought Him no "sweet cane,"⁵ no offerings of thankful hearts, yet is He ready to blot out all our sins if we will but turn to Him with an acknowledgment of our transgressions.⁷ Oh, merciful revelation! that we may come to Him not with hopeless adoration as those poor creatures who bow down to idols of wood and stone,⁸ but with a certainty of our prayers being heard and answered, for He is our LORD, and beside Him is no Saviour.⁹ GOD grant that in this new year just begun we may indeed learn more truly to seek our Saviour, and in all things obey His blessed will.¹⁰

¹ Morning Lesson, verses 1, 4; ² verses 2-4, 6;

³ verses 2-4, 7; ⁴ verses 13, 25.

⁵ Evening Lesson, verse 4; ⁶ verse 24;

⁷ verse 26.

⁸ Alt. Evening Lesson.

⁹ Evening Lesson, verse 11.

¹⁰ Collect.



The Epiphany.*Epistle*, Ephesians, iii. 1.*Morning Lessons*, Isaiah, lx.

St. Luke, iii. 15-23.

Gospel, St. Matthew, ii. 1.*Evening Lessons*, Isaiah, xlix.

13-24; St. John, ii. 1-12.

 HIS is a festival of especial joy to all the members of the Gentile Church.

On this day CHRIST our Saviour was manifested or made known to the eastern Magi, and through them to the whole heathen world which they represented. Through the Epiphany of CHRIST, we, amongst other nations of the Gentiles, were turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto GOD, and received an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Him. (Acts, xxvi. 18.) Therefore does the Church commemorate with holy joy the manifestation of the Blessed JESUS; she teaches us to walk in the light which He has made to shine upon us, praying that it may lead us, as it did those early Gentile converts, into the very presence of our LORD.

But to obtain their blessing we must copy their example, as it is set before us in the Gospel for the day. They persevered through the dangers of a long and perilous journey, obediently following the directions of the star which GOD had given them for a guide, until it brought them safely to the place where the young Child was.¹ CHRIST's holy religion is the guiding star which directs Christians in their long and troublesome journey through this world. By the light of His Gospel

¹ Gospel, verse 9.

and of His Church, and of His Holy Spirit acting through sacred ordinances, He teaches us what we ought to do, and then gives us grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; and we must persevere in following this light if we would arrive safely at the place where our LORD and Saviour is. According to the measure in which we act up to this holy light will He manifest Himself to us by faith here, and prepare us for the full "fruition of His glorious Godhead"¹ hereafter.

And when the wise men had found our LORD, we read how they had faith to worship, as the GOD and Saviour of mankind, Him, Who, to outward appearance, was only a little child;² and so, when we come into the presence of CHRIST our Saviour, in His temple on earth, we must by faith believe our GOD and Saviour to be amongst us, though not visible to our bodily senses. We must offer of the best of our earthly substance in the place where He has chosen to place His name, believing that He is there to receive our gifts, though we see Him not; and to our temporal offerings we must join those sacrifices of the heart which the gifts of the Magi typify or represent. Pure love and charity, which is intended by the gold, ardent devotion, which is typified by the incense, and the complete mortification of our corrupt nature, which the myrrh signifies, must be united in the worship of those who would present their body, soul, and spirit, a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Him.

In these manifestations of our LORD which we are now commemorating, we see an accomplishment of the glorious prophecies of Isaiah selected for this day. These prophecies will not be finally

¹ Collect.

² Gospel, verse 11.

fulfilled until all the kingdoms of this world have become the "kingdoms of our LORD and of His CHRIST;" but their accomplishment began when, as on this day, "the Gentiles first came to His light, and kings to the brightness of His rising."¹ From that time the gates of CHRIST's Church have been opened continually to bring in the forces of the Gentiles,² receiving every soul that seeks "the door" (see St. John, x. 1-9) to enter in. The "sons of the stranger"³ are being received into GOD's house; a little one is becoming a thousand;⁴ and the grain of mustard seed is growing into a large and spreading tree. We ourselves, amongst the other "isles of the Gentiles," have been brought to wait on the Name of the LORD, so that the LORD is to us an everlasting light, and our GOD our glory.⁵

In the same manner do the promises in the first Evening Lesson apply to us as members of a Gentile Church. CHRIST bids us go forth from the darkness in which we have been prisoners,⁶ for that He will have mercy upon us and lead us. Our Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob, the Holy One of Israel, declares that He has heard us in an accepted time, and in the day of salvation has succoured us.⁷ He will gather his people together,—setting up His standard amongst them, making kings to be their nursing fathers, and queens their nursing mothers.⁸

Such is also the gracious meaning of those passages in the Epistle, where it is said that the Gentiles are made fellow-heirs of the same Body,

¹ First Morning Lesson, verse 3;

² verse 11;

³ verse 10;

⁴ verse 22;

⁵ verse 19.

⁶ First Evening Lesson, verse 9;

⁷ verses 7, 8;

⁸ verses 22, 23.

and partakers of the promise of CHRIST, through His Gospel;¹ that to them are preached the unsearchable riches of CHRIST, and that they have now boldness and access through the faith that is in Him.²

The second Lessons speak of the manifestation of CHRIST as the SON of GOD. When JESUS came to be baptized of John, the heavens were opened that the Messiah might be revealed as one Person of the Eternal Trinity; the Holy Spirit visibly descended upon Him while the voice of the Father from heaven declared, "Thou art my Beloved Son."³ In the second Evening Lesson we read of the sanctification of matrimony, and of harmless mirth, by the presence of the Saviour, at the marriage feast of Cana. Here first, He "manifested forth His glory" in the miracle of the water turned into wine, and His disciples, astonished at His power, believed on Him.⁴ Thus did the *man* CHRIST JESUS fulfil the expectations of those who had watched with faith the wonders that surrounded His childhood. How far more fully is He revealed to *us* who can gaze, not only by the starlight of prophecy, but by the full blaze of Gospel glory, upon the complete picture of the work of our redemption. May this manifestation of GOD's mercy and condescension produce in us the gratitude and love which will guide and sanctify our lives as His children, that when finally He shall be manifested to us in the fulness of His glory we may "enter into the fruition of His glorious Godhead."⁵

¹ Epistle, verse 6;

² Second Morning Lesson, verse 22.

⁴ Second Evening Lesson, verse 11.

³ verses 8, 12.

⁵ Collect.

First Sunday after the Epiphany.

Epistle, Romans, xii. 1.
Gospel, St. Luke ii. 41.

Morning Lesson, Isaiah, li.
Evening Lesson, Isaiah, lii.
 13, and liii. or liv.



CURING the past festival we have been rejoicing in the light which CHRIST brought to lighten every man that cometh into the world. Now we have to learn how to walk in that light, so that it may not have shone in vain for us; for as well might we expect the light of the sun to force us into a safe path without our own exertions, as that the Sun of Righteousness should guide us into the way of peace without diligence and carefulness on our part. This is what the Church endeavours to impress upon us in the Sunday services after the Epiphany; for while the Gospels and Proper Lessons still continue to show forth the glory and majesty of the Divine Saviour, the Epistles supply us with advice and exhortations, which, being written by St. Paul for his Gentile converts, are suited to all whom CHRIST has brought out of darkness into His marvellous light.

So it is with the services of this day. If we rightly understand and apply them, they will teach us how to profit by that light which we have now received.

The Collect prays for light to see our duty, and strength to perform it. We learn from the Epistle that an entire surrender of self, and submission to GOD, are required of all those who call themselves children of light. Love of the world and conformity to its wicked practices, obscure the light which

First Sunday after the Epiphany. 41

GOD has made to shine in our hearts; therefore the children of light are not to be "conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds."¹ Pride and self-conceit cannot reign in the hearts of those who depend for everything on the light of GOD's grace; therefore the children of light must watch, lest they "think of themselves more highly than they ought to think."² In short, if we would keep the light of GOD shining brightly in our hearts, we must renounce or subdue everything that would prevent us from yielding up ourselves "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto Him."³

The Morning Lesson begins with an exhortation from the Messiah to His people, *i. e.* to those who call upon,⁴ and seek, the LORD.⁵ They are reminded of the mercies shown to Abraham⁶ because, amid the idolatry of surrounding nations, he clave to the LORD, and believed His promises, and walked in His light. They are warned also of that which keeps so many away from the light of truth, the fear of man,⁷ the fear of what others will say of us, the moral cowardice, which is the ruin of so many souls. The impotence of man is contrasted with the omnipotence of GOD,⁸ the shortness of the struggle against sin in this world, with the eternity of peace which is the reward of the redeemed in the land of joy and gladness from which sorrow and mourning shall be for ever banished.⁹ While in one verse, the people are represented as calling on the Messiah to awake¹⁰ to their deliverance, in another,¹¹ He appeals to His people to awake from the lethargy of sin and sloth that they may be

¹ Epistle, verse 2; ² verse 3; ³ verse 1. ⁴ Collect.
⁵ Morning Lesson, verse 1; ⁶ verse 2; ⁷ verse 7;
⁸ verse 8; ⁹ verse 11; ¹⁰ verse 9; ¹¹ verse 17.

ready to receive Him, when like the "bright and morning star" He shall shed His beams of glory from heaven, bringing "peace¹ upon earth and good will towards men." The first Evening Lesson is the prophecy, so accurately fulfilled, of the manner in which Messiah should work out redemption for us—the *manifestation* in prophecy of the Redeemer in His Humility and His sufferings.

So intensely solemn is this chapter, yet so plain and simple in its language, that comment upon it would be superfluous. It should be made the subject of the deepest meditation, accompanied by prayer, most earnest, that we may be found worthier of such mighty love.

In the chapter which forms the alternative Evening Lesson the prophet bursts forth into a hymn of glory for the salvation thus wrought in Zion.² He sees, with prophetic eye, the enlargement of the borders of GOD's kingdom, the spread of the Church, from the land of the chosen people to the furthest boundaries of the earth.³ He speaks with exultation of the coming Messiah, Who shall be, not only "the man of sorrows,"⁴ but the "Holy One of Israel" and "the GOD of the whole earth,"⁵ who shall establish His Church to ride triumphant over the billows of the world, as the ark over the Deluge, for ever secure in the covenant of His peace.⁶ While Isaiah thinks, perhaps, of the first fulfilment of his prophecy in the restoration of Israel and the rebuilding of Jerusalem,⁷ we see in his words the foretelling of the world's redemption, and the completion of the Church

¹ Morning Lesson, verses 22, 23.

² Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 1;

³ verses 2, 3.

⁴ Evening Lesson, verse 3. ⁵ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 5;

⁶ verse 10;

⁷ verses 11-16.

Second Sunday after the Epiphany. 43

triumphant in heaven, when the trials of the Church militant be passed.

No weapons of worldly anger or scorn,¹ no schisms and heresies, no doubts or superstitions, from the armoury of hell, shall prevail against that Church which, founded on the apostles and prophets, has JESUS CHRIST Himself as her "chief corner-stone."

But though the Church must stand, individual members may fall away, and of us, to whom so much—so many privileges, so much light of revelation and truth—has been given, shall much be required. We must therefore seek for grace, to become more earnest members of CHRIST's Holy Church, by the constant prayer that "we may both perceive and know what things we ought to do, and have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same through JESUS CHRIST our LORD."²



Second Sunday after the Epiphany.

Epistle, Romans, xii. 6.
Gospel, St. John, ii. 1.

Morning Lesson, Isaiah, lv.
Evening Lesson, Isaiah, lvii.
or lxi.

NE of the first blessings which the light of CHRIST brings to those who walk in it, is that of peace. The Day-spring from on high came to "guide our feet into the way of peace," as well as to "give light to them that sit in darkness." (St. Luke, ii. 79.) This is why the second Sunday after the Epiphany speaks to us of peace, praying for it, and guiding us in its paths.

¹ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 17.

² Collect.

To obtain the peace of GOD, for which the Collect prays, we must believe that "He does govern all things, both in heaven and earth;" for nothing but this will support us in the changes and chances of this mortal life. From such trials the children of light are not more free than others. All the days of their life, even from their very childhood, GOD lays His cross upon them; but by the light of His grace shining in their hearts, He shows them how all these "things work together for good to those who love GOD;" and so their minds are kept in perfect peace, because they trust in Him. "They are not afraid of any evil tidings, because their heart standeth fast, believing in the LORD." But to be thus at peace with GOD, and with ourselves, we must live at peace with our brethren. This it is which the Epistle for this day enforces upon us. Continuing the chapter of last Sunday, it teaches us to consider ourselves as members of one great Body, of which CHRIST is the Head. From this figure we see how the peace and well-being of the whole Church is influenced by the conduct of each of her members separately, just as the health and rest of our whole body depend on the soundness of each separate part. We learn, that every member of CHRIST's body has received gifts, "differing according to the grace that is in him;" by the faithful, or unfaithful, use of which, he may be influencing, more than he is aware, the peace and well-being of his fellow members. How diligently, then, should we observe the rules which the Apostle here gives to every member of the Church of CHRIST, striving, each, in our several callings, to improve the gifts which may have fallen to our share.

To be content with that calling, whatever it may

be, is the first duty he enjoins.¹ When one member goes out of his place, wishing or trying to do the work of another, he acts against the Providence of GOD, and disturbs the peace of the whole body. If, then, we would be useful members of CHRIST's Church, we must be content to teach or to learn, to rule or to obey, to work or to stand still, just as the will of GOD disposes of us ; remembering, for our encouragement, that as the weaker and smaller portions of the body are not the less valuable to us, so no member of CHRIST is rendered less precious in His sight on account of the lowliness or insignificance of his station.

Diligence² in doing the work appointed us, is another duty of CHRIST's members ; for we know that the deadness or inactivity of a single limb would be apt to bring disease and confusion into the whole body. "Fervour in spirit," doing all things and suffering all things for the glory of GOD, are also laid down as marks of CHRIST's true members. Again, the members of CHRIST, being so closely linked together, must be "kindly affectioned one to another,"³ sympathizing in each other's cares and joys, as if they were their own. "When one member suffers, all the members suffer with it ; and when one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it." (1 Cor. xii. 26.)

If every member were thus living together in unity of spirit and in the bond of peace, holding the Head from which all the body by joints and bands hath nourishment ministered, how would the whole body daily increase with the increase of God ! (Col. ii. 19.)

Our LORD's manifestation at the marriage in

¹ Epistle, verses 6-8 ;

² verse 11 ;

³ verse 10.

Cana in Galilee is again selected for our meditation this day ; not only as being appropriate to the season, but also as having an especial reference to the services of this day. The holy estate of matrimony is another emblem or figure of the mystical union between CHRIST and His Church. It represents the peace and harmony which His faithful members enjoy here, and the still higher degree of concord and happiness which is in store for them in heaven ; and so does this miracle convey to us a high and holy lesson. It teaches us to live as in His presence, making Him our guest on every occasion of our lives, and doing whatsoever He saith unto us,¹ without doubt or questioning. This, if we do, He Who changed the water into wine will change the mixed and uncertain happiness we enjoy even now in His Church militant for the higher peace and glory of His Church triumphant.

The Lessons of the day bear out its special teaching of peace. The Morning Lesson describes in prophetic language the invitation of the Messiah to His kingdom of peace ; He upbraids His people for seeking satisfaction everywhere but at His hand.² He alone can satisfy the cravings of the hungry and thirsty soul ;³ by Him alone can "they that hunger and thirst after righteousness be filled." (St. Matt. v. 6.) "Hear and your soul shall live,"⁴ he exclaims, but the life of the soul must be displayed in the action of body and spirit. We must *seek* the LORD before we can find Him, and *call* upon Him ere He will hear us ; evil ways and evil thoughts must be given up,⁵ no matter how bitter the struggle ; but if so we will do, we need not then fear the past, the peace of pardon is at

¹ Gospel, verse 5. ² Morning Lesson, verse 2 ;
³ verse 1 ; ⁴ verse 3 ; ⁵ verses 6, 7.

Second Sunday after the Epiphany. 47

hand from Him, Who not only *can* but *will* abundantly forgive.¹ As the rain descends from heaven, fertilizing the earth and giving means of further fertilization,² so shall the peace of GOD descend, through the ministration of His Word³ and Sacrament, comforting the soul and giving it the power of imparting its peace to others.

The Israelites had sought to obtain material peace by allying themselves to an idolatrous nation, rather than trusting in GOD to save them from their enemies as He had always done. This is referred to in the Evening Lesson,⁴ and, through the rebuke administered by the mouth of the prophet, we are taught, not to seek the false peace which may be acquired by a league with the world or a deadening of the conscience; this peace is but as a vain thing, which the first wind of Divine truth will disperse. The only true peace is that of the humble and contrite spirit⁵ that rests on GOD alone in all its troubles. This peace is offered to all the world⁶ through JESUS CHRIST, and it is to be for a solace to the dying bed of the righteous Christian,⁷ for his death shall be but the entering into the fulness of peace from the struggles of life.

As the Herald of Peace the Saviour came into the world; to the broken-hearted by reason of their sinfulness, to the captives of Satan and sin, JESUS preached the gospel of peace;⁸ and only to those who wilfully continue in the bondage of sin, are the awful words spoken "there is no peace to the wicked."⁹ Thus plainly we are taught by the Holy Spirit, where, alone, peace in life, and a

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 7; ² verse 10; ³ verse 11.

⁴ Evening Lesson, verse 9; ⁵ verse 15; ⁶ verse 19;

⁷ verses 1, 2. ⁸ Alt. Evening Lesson, verses 1, 2.

⁹ Evening Lesson, verse 21.

peaceful death, are to be sought. Let us learn to seek for this peace by diligent prayer, and compass it in holy lives. "Oh, merciful GOD, grant us Thy peace all the days of our life."¹



Third Sunday after the Epiphany.

Epistle, Romans, xii. 16. *Morning Lesson*, Isaiah, lxii.
Gospel, St. Matthew, viii. 1. *Evening Lesson*, Isaiah, lrv.
 lxi.

WHEN the light of the sun has guided us safely into the right path, its next use is to discover to us our dangers, and show us how to avoid them. So it is with the light of GOD's grace. Having guided us into the paths of holiness² and peace,³ its next step is to show us the dangers which surround us, and to teach us where to look for safety.

Our chief danger lies in the weakness of our nature; therefore, in the Collect, we beseech Almighty GOD "mercifully to look upon our infirmities." Then the Epistle cautions us against the particular feelings into which the infirmities of our nature would be most likely to lead us. It points to the pride⁴ and malice⁵ of our own hearts, as the enemies from whom we have most to fear; for "pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." These are the root of all evil, the very beginning of all sin; they are the tools which the devil makes use of, to ruin men's souls;

¹ Collect.

² See Services for First Sunday after Epiphany.

³ See Services for Second Sunday after Epiphany.

⁴ Epistle, verse 16;

⁵ verse 19.

Third Sunday after the Epiphany. 49

and they are the more dangerous, because they do not come upon us all at once, but little by little, taking us in their snares before we are aware, and making even our best actions and intentions to be sometimes an occasion of falling. Thus a spirit of self-satisfaction in anything we do, when it is felt apart from gratitude to GOD, Who has enabled us both to "will and to do," will lead us on to pride and self-confidence; therefore let us watch that we be not "wise in our own conceits."¹ When we think we have gained any advantage, or risen one step in our spiritual course, let us immediately ascribe all the glory to GOD, saying, "Not I, but the grace of GOD which was with me." And as it is with pride, so also is it with anger. Our self-love first persuades us that we are hardly dealt with, or injured by our neighbours; if not immediately checked, this thought will lead us on to anger—anger will be followed by revenge;² and so begins the sin which has been known to end in murder. To avoid so sad a fall, we must follow the apostle's injunction of trying to live peaceably with all men;³ and if others will not live peaceably with us, we must never "recompense evil for evil;"⁴ rather should we try to soften their hearts by kindness and forbearance, for as fire softens the hardest substance, so will repeated offices of kindness and charity at last melt even the stony heart of the enemy.⁵

From what we have now learnt of the nature of sin and of its dangers, we see why Holy Scripture often compares it to leprosy, and why the cure of the leper is especially set before us in the Gospel for this day. Leprosy is a loathsome and deadly

¹ Epistle, verse 16;

² verse 19;

³ verse 18;

⁴ verse 17;

⁵ verse 20.

disease, which it is beyond the power of human skill to cure. Sin is that fatal and deadly disease of the soul, which none but the Saviour of mankind can heal. Leprosy does not show itself all at once, but begins with a small and apparently trifling spot, which gradually spreads itself over the whole body; just as sin has its origin in a bad—what we should call a trifling thought—and then insensibly creeps over the whole soul. The leper, by the Jewish law, was shut out from the society of his fellow men; by the laws of GOD, the hardened and impenitent sinner shuts himself out from communion with the saints on earth and blessed spirits in heaven. This deadly disease still clings even about regenerate Christians. It is the greatest danger which besets the path of the children of light; from our very childhood its spots are continually showing themselves, and must be as continually checked.

But if we have the leper's disease, we have also the leper's cure. CHRIST, the healer of mankind, is still really, though invisibly, present to heal our diseases and strengthen our infirmities. By the assistance of His Spirit, and the healing of His grace, He now stretches out His "right hand," in answer to our prayers.

Only we must follow the leper's example:—First, we must be as sensible of our misery as he was of his, and as desirous to be released from it. We must approach CHRIST with extreme reverence, kneeling down before Him and confessing our unworthiness. We must strictly use the means appointed for our cure; and then, putting our whole trust in Him, believe that "if He will, He can make us clean."¹ The cure of the Centurion's

¹ Gospel, verse 2.

Third Sunday after the Epiphany. 51

servant, which follows this account of the leper, is perhaps even more encouraging to those who see CHRIST by faith and not by sense. From it we learn that He is able to dispense His healing power by His word as well as by His touch; in His absence as when He was bodily present. Even to us who have been gathered "from the east and west"¹ does He now dispense the healing power of His grace, by means of His apostles and commissioned servants. But as to the sick man, so also to us, is this blessing granted, only according to our faith. Only so far as by faith we see the precious Blood of CHRIST cleansing us through sacraments and other outward means, do these outward means possess any healing efficacy.

The Morning Lesson speaks again of the Light manifested to the Gentiles² and the salvation wrought in Zion.³ An aptly chosen simile⁴ reminds us of our LORD's injunction to those who would be worthy members of the Zion of CHRIST's Church—watch and pray. Vigour and earnestness were necessary to the Jews to enable them to rise from the apathy and degradation of captivity in order to return to Jerusalem;⁵ such, too, is required of us Christians if we would free ourselves from the trammels of sin, and journey forward to the Heavenly Jerusalem. He Who calleth us, can surely help and defend us on the road, and though we may feel our weakness, and be conscious of our sins, we know that GOD is long-suffering⁶ and always ready to hear and help⁷ those, who turn from their own weakness, to rely on His strength. The peace of the heavenly Jerusalem is again

¹ Gospel, verse 11.

² Morning Lesson, verse 2;

³ verse 11;

⁴ verse 6;

⁵ verse 10.

⁶ Evening Lesson, verse 2;

⁷ verse 24.

placed before us,¹ and we are reminded that there is our Home to which we are journeying, and that those who labour for the LORD here shall rest in Him hereafter. Though so much depends, indeed, on our own exertions, we are to beware of self-reliance; for only "the poor in spirit"² inherit the kingdom of heaven.

The book of Isaiah is sealed by a word of terrible warning³ to those who refuse to seek for strength, or, when given, to wield it, and the words here used are the same with which our LORD threatens those who give way to an evil nature, to evil habit, or to evil companions.⁴ Against all such dangers let us learn ever more earnestly to pray that GOD will "stretch forth His right hand to help and defend us."⁵



Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany.

Epistle, Romans, xiii. 1.
Gospel, St. Matthew, viii. 23.

Morning Lesson, Job, xxvii.
Evening Lesson, Job, xxviii.
or xxix.

WE have seen how the light of GOD's grace preserves us from the dangers of our own hearts. To-day we learn how it can guide us safely in the dangers and troubles which surround us in the world.

Most of the troubles and confusion which disturb mankind have their origin in the disobedience and rebellion of man. His natural pride and self-will

¹ Evening Lesson, verses 23-25.

² Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 2; and St. Matthew, v. 3.

³ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 24.

⁴ St. Mark, ix. 44, &c.

⁵ Collect.

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany. 53

incline him to be disobedient and rebellious to the authority which is set over him, and so to disturb his own and his neighbour's peace. The first step towards promoting peace and concord in the world is, to teach men the principles of submission and obedience. These two virtues are amongst the first which the light of CHRIST'S Gospel brought into the world ; and they are therefore those which the Epistle for this day specially enforces upon the children of light.

We, Christians, are taught to look upon our rulers as messengers sent from GOD to control and direct us, and to consider disobedience to them as disobedience to Him Who set them over us.¹ And this is the difference between our submission and that of the heathens. They were subject for "wrath"—we for "conscience sake ;"² their motive was a mere fear of man—ours springs from love and obedience to GOD.

This duty of loyalty or submission to the higher powers is one which is binding upon every Christian in every age and station of life. GOD has set over our country a sovereign to administer justice "for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well." The sovereign sends magistrates and rulers to maintain peace and discipline amongst those over whom they are appointed to rule. Over the Church, GOD has set pastors and teachers, whom we are to "obey as those that have the rule over us." (Heb. xiii. 17.) Whosoever, therefore, resisteth those powers, speaking lightly of their authority, or opposing their commands, "resisteth the ordinance of God."

Again, masters of families and parents are also amongst the higher powers, to which every soul

¹ Epistle, verse 1 ;

² verse v.

placed under them is to be subject. Christian servants are commanded to serve their masters, not with eye service, as men pleasers, but as those that serve the LORD CHRIST; and children are to obey their parents, or their teachers to whom their parents entrust them, "because it is right and well-pleasing unto the LORD." It is the breaking of these laws, and resisting these ordinances, which causes schism in the Church, sedition in the state, discord and quarrelling in families. Those who do so can expect no strength or protection; while such as walk orderly, under the several authorities which the providence of GOD has set over them, have nothing to fear. To them the minister of justice is a minister of good, and not of evil, and should he fail to protect them, the GOD whom they serve is able to deliver them. Nevertheless, it sometimes happens that GOD suffers the rebellious passions of wicked men to triumph for a time, in order that through them He may train and discipline His faithful servants. This is signified to us in the Gospel under the emblem of the ship at sea. The stormy sea represents the trouble and misery which the devil stirs up in the world; the ship is the Church, in which CHRIST is guiding His faithful people through the "waves of this troublesome world" to their everlasting rest. His being present with them, though asleep, shows how He watches over His faithful members, even while He "makes as though He heard them not."

In His good time, however, He manifests His divine power to still the raging tempest;¹ and so will He in His good time save His Church out of

¹ Gospel, verse 26.

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany. 55

trouble, if its members have faith to persevere in earnest prayer. He Whose mighty power could drive out the evil spirits from the man possessed with the devils¹ will cure the evil passions of man's heart, and reduce them to peace and order.

It is easy to understand why the three Lessons from the book of Job have been selected for to-day. The dangers, trials, and temptations of life are the subjects of our meditation and our prayers. The Gospel, indeed, points out the ever-watchful care of the Saviour over His children even when the waves of temptation and trial seem almost ready to close over their heads,² and it teaches us submission with faith.³ The Parable,⁴ or inspired saying, of Job, is to show us that these trials are not necessarily the sign of GOD's wrath, and the *possession* as well as the *loss* of temporal wealth and prosperity may be the source of temptation, trial, and misery.⁵ Job undertakes his own vindication⁶ and the justification of GOD's dealings with him; he maintains that the terrible calamities which have befallen him are not the sign of GOD's wrath against him. If they were so, he would be found in despair, as is the case with the wicked⁷ when they receive the due reward of their deeds. Yet he could not be accused of lack of hope who had himself, but a short time before, expressed his faith in a living Redeemer, and his belief that in his flesh he should behold Him. (Job, xix. 26, 27.) The wicked may "flourish as a green bay tree" while the righteous suffer. But whether punished with temporal calamities, or suffered to flourish in their worldly matters, the case of the wicked is the

¹ Gospel, verse 32; ² verse 24; ³ verse 26.

⁴ Morning Lesson, verse 1; ⁵ verses 13-23;

⁶ verse 6; ⁷ verses 8, 9.

same: they have no inward peace—"there is no peace for the wicked."

From this consideration Job passes on to that splendid description of the true Wisdom which alone can bring a man peace, whether in the temptations of wealth or the trial of affliction. Blessed with all the wealth which this earth can produce, possessor of everything which the worldly mind could desire, a man can yet find no true peace without true wisdom. "The price of it is above rubies;"¹ the richest cannot purchase it; the poorest and most oppressed can possess it. By the grace of GOD alone the gift is given.² "The fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding."³

In the alternative Evening Lesson Job speaks of the days of his prosperity, and vindicates his use of the blessings then bestowed upon him.⁴

Surely his calamities were discipline rather than chastisement! May we have grace equally well to make use of the bounties He may bestow upon us, that whether we be tempted by the continuance of prosperity, or tried by the sorrows of failure and poverty, we may in all things receive His "strength and protection,"⁵ Who always affords them to those who have found the true wisdom, who depart from evil, and who fear the LORD.

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 18; ² verse 23; ³ verse 28.

⁴ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 12, &c.

⁵ Collect.



Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany.

Epistle, Colossians, iii. 12. *Morning Lesson*, Proverbs, 1.
Gospel, St. Matthew, xiii. *Evening Lesson*, Proverbs, iii.
 24. or viii.

IN the midst of the troubles and dangers of the world, we have been taught to look for safety to the Church of CHRIST. Yet even here we must not rest too secure. In the safest vessel all may not be brought to land ; out of the many who are called to CHRIST'S Church militant on earth, all may not be chosen to live in His Church triumphant in heaven.

This is the thought conveyed to us in the services of this day. The Gospel represents to us our Blessed LORD under the figure of a householder planting good seed in a field.¹ The field is the Kingdom or Church of CHRIST, which He has chosen out of the world to sow and to cultivate. We, Christians, are the seed, whom, at our baptism, He sowed in it, making us holy and good. The devil, who tries to corrupt us, is represented by the enemy sowing tares.² He is continually sowing sin and wickedness amongst us, both in the world and in the hearts of men ; making us to fall away from the holiness we once received from GOD. So it is that many Christians, who have been once illuminated by the heavenly gifts of GOD'S grace, become like tares in a field of good wheat, dead branches of a living vine, unprofitable members of a holy Church. All, however, are allowed to grow together until the time of the harvest.³ GOD

¹ Gospel, verse 24 ; ² verse 25 ; ³ verse 30.

allows His faithful and unfaithful servants to live together in the world and in the Church, thus proving and training the former, and giving to the latter a longer space for repentance. But after seedtime comes the harvest, and after this life comes the judgment. At the time of harvest the tares are gathered into bundles to be burned, while the wheat is gathered into the barn.¹ So shall it be at the end of the world. GOD hath appointed a day in which He shall judge the world in righteousness. He Who now manifests Himself in mercy, shall then manifest Himself in terror, taking vengeance on them that obey not the Gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and making the righteous to "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father." (St. Matt. xiii. 43.)

The Epistle speaks of our duties as "the elect of GOD, holy and beloved,"² seeming to point out to us how we may distinguish between the wheat and tares of the field of CHRIST's Church.

The Lessons are selected from the Proverbs of Solomon, and point in the same direction, teaching us the true wisdom which must distinguish the children of light from the children of this world.

Last Sunday from the lips of Job we learnt what was true wisdom, and how inestimable its value, and now we hear the declarations of Job affirmed by the words of the "Wise King." We are warned by him of the constant presence of evil around us, and of the necessity of a constant watchfulness, particularly against the attractions of society and the enticements of its chosen frivolous companions.³ Wisdom is identified with the fear of the LORD,⁴ (Job xviii. 28,) which finds no place in the hearts

¹ Gospel, verse 30.

² Epistle, verse 1.

³ Morning Lesson, verses 10-15;

⁴ verse 29.

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany. 59

of those who court only worldly wisdom and fear only the mockery of man.

But the time is coming when, in the dreadful day of judgment,¹ those fools will learn too late the terror of God ; awakened from the sleep of apathy, self-reliance, and man-pleasing, like the foolish virgins of the parable, they will find themselves shut out from heaven, while those only who have through "good report and evil report" followed after wisdom, shall at last "dwell safely and quiet from all fear of evil."²

The Evening Lessons continue the instructions in the way of true wisdom. We are warned against a reliance upon our own knowledge,³ and taught confidence in the wisdom of GOD's dealings with us even when they may *seem* harsh and hard to bear.⁴

The rewards of wisdom are pointed out and its value extolled in words very similar to those made use of by Job,⁵ and its meaning is again given as "the fear of the LORD and the hating of the evil way."⁶

Those, then, who would be worthy members of the Church of CHRIST, and come to salvation through her means, must lay hold on this true wisdom, without which they would degenerate and become as the tares in the field of wheat, not only useless but noxious.

But the fear of the LORD and the departing from evil must lead to a seeking of GOD and a reliance on His strength, and so the mind is gently led up to that which must follow in the growth of grace ; from the fear of the LORD which is the beginning

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 27 ;

² verse 33.

³ Evening Lesson, verses 5-7 ;

⁴ verse 11 ;

⁵ verse 14, &c.

⁶ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 13.

of wisdom, to the love of GOD which is its climax ; a love which is not unreturned, but which brings down from heaven upon us all the riches of the affection of a Father Omnipotent.¹

May we, in the harvest of the resurrection day, be found among the good corn in the field of the Church of CHRIST ;² being found "rich in wisdom," with our hearts "ruled by the peace of God,"³ living together as an united household "leaning only on the hope of GOD's heavenly grace," and being "evermore defended by His mighty power."⁴



Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany.

Epistle, 1 St. John, iii. 1.
Gospel, St. Matthew, xxiv.
23.

Morning Lesson, Proverbs, ix.
Evening Lesson, Proverbs, xi.
or xv.

THIS being the last Sunday of the season, the services dwell on the two great Epiphanies of our LORD, and show how His first manifestation in the flesh, which we have been now commemorating, is to prepare us for His second appearing in glory.

In the Epistle, St. John speaks of the happiness which shall be brought to all glorified spirits at this second and glorious appearing. It will consist in being like GOD,⁵ and seeing Him as He is.

What the full meaning of these wonderful expressions is we cannot yet understand; for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of GOD," and "eye hath not seen nor ear heard

¹ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 17.

² Gospel.

³ Epistle, verse 15.

⁴ Collect.

⁵ Epistle, verse 2.

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the things which GOD hath prepared for them that love Him." It is GOD'S will that we should walk by faith, and not by sight. So far, however, we learn from Holy Scripture, that by changing "our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body," CHRIST will make us like unto Himself. (Phil. iii. 21.) Christians, who are now united to Him through the Spirit, shall then rise again, and ascend into heaven with a human though glorified body, of the same nature as that with which their LORD rose again and ascended. A change will pass upon their persons, tempers, and inclinations. They shall be free from all the frailties and infirmities and earthly thoughts which have distressed them through life. Delighting in nothing but to do GOD'S will, they shall know neither sin nor sorrow more, but shall be "as the angels of GOD in heaven." That in this blessed and glorious state, we shall have the awful privilege of "seeing GOD as He is," we know from the words of our Blessed Saviour Himself. He has told us that life eternal consists in knowing GOD. (St. John, xvii. 3.) He prayed for us that we might be with Him where He is, and behold His glory, (verse 24,) and He has promised to the pure in heart that "they shall see GOD." (St. Matt. v. 8.)

Such is the glorious state to which we look forward; it remains for us to take heed that we lose not the prize of our high calling.

If, then, we would be admitted into the place where there shall "in no wise enter anything that defileth," our work on earth must be to "purify ourselves," even as our Saviour CHRIST is pure."¹ We must continually guard and keep that soul

¹ Epistle, verse 3.

which He hath cleansed and prepared for Himself, warding off the sins which are most likely to defile it ; or, if we are unfortunately overtaken by them, never must we cease our penitential prayers, until He has "washed us thoroughly from our wickedness and cleansed us from our sin." It is by thus "purifying ourselves even as He is pure," that we shall be prepared for that last awful manifestation, which forms the subject of our LORD's discourse in the Gospel for this day. What is here written has been once partly fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem, and will again be accomplished at the last day. It is, therefore, "a thing established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." Though many "false Christs and false prophets"¹ will first appear, yet a time will come when CHRIST Himself shall be manifested in the clouds of heaven to "gather together His elect from the four winds."²

As our Blessed LORD was seen by His disciples to go into heaven after His first manifestation of Himself in humility, so shall He come again in like manner at His second manifestation in glory.

Then a cloud received Him out of sight ; when He comes again it will be "in the clouds with power and great glory." Then He sent His angels to warn His chosen of His second coming ; that second time He will send His angels to gather His elect before the judgment seat. He ascended in the form of His glorified humanity ; as "the Son of Man" He will descend to welcome His own to the mansions He has gone before to prepare for them.³

The Lessons of the day are again selected from

¹ Gospel, verse 24 ;

² Cf. Gospel and Acts, i. 9-11.

³ verse 31.

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the inspired Proverbs of the wise king, and they give us maxims for the conduct of our daily life, if we would be prepared aright to receive our LORD, when the second time He shall be manifested, for judgment.

These Proverbs instruct us to live in faith, with the fear of GOD always before our eyes,¹ that we may receive the reward of heavenly wisdom, which is eternal life.² They teach us the necessity of honesty³ and truth,⁴ righteousness⁵ and humility,⁶ in all our dealings; and declare that these virtues win their own reward, not only in the truest respect among our fellow men,⁷ but also in the love of our Heavenly Father Who sees in secret.⁸ Charity⁹ and liberality¹⁰ towards our fellow men are inculcated, but trust in riches or confidence in the esteem of the world is condemned.¹¹ By the Proverbs of the alternative Evening Lesson, we are reminded of the ever-presence of GOD, not only to watch and judge our thoughts and actions,¹² but also to hear and answer the prayer of the righteous,¹³ while the whole teaching is concluded with the instruction of the past two Sundays that the truest wisdom and surest guide through life is the fear of the LORD, and the noblest Christian is the humblest man.¹⁴

If truly we follow the maxims of this inspired wisdom and strive against the evil they point out, we may be sure, in the struggle, of His help Who was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and so may walk worthier of our high and holy

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 10;

² verse 11.

³ Evening Lesson, verses 1, 9;

⁴ verse 9;

⁵ verse 6;

⁶ verse 2;

⁷ verses 10, 31;

⁸ verse 18;

⁹ verse 13;

¹⁰ verse 26;

¹¹ verses 4, 28.

¹² Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 3;

¹³ verse 29;

¹⁴ verse 33.

calling as sons of GOD and heirs of eternal life. "God give us grace to purify ourselves even as He is pure, that when He shall appear again we may be made like unto Him."¹



Septuagesima Sunday.

Epistle, 1 Corinthians, ix. *Morning Lessons*, Genesis, i. ii. 1-4; Revelation, xxi. 1-9.
^{24.}
Gospel, St. Matthew, xx. 1. *Evening Lessons*, Genesis, ii. 4, or Job, xxxviii.; Revelation, xxi. 9, to xxii. 6.

IN Septuagesima Sunday we turn from the coming and manifestation of our Blessed Redeemer to the thought of our sins, which were the cause of His coming; therefore we change the voice of praise and thanksgiving for that of penitence and sorrow. This was the day on which some of the early Christians were accustomed to begin their Lent, and it is the day on which Christians now begin to prepare for its approach. Forty days was the time originally assigned by the Church for the exercise of penitential sorrow and fasting; and the season of Lent was appointed to begin forty-six days before Easter, in order that the intervening six Sundays might be kept as festivals without diminishing the forty days' fast. The first Sunday in Lent, being the Sunday nearest to the fortieth day, was therefore called the Sunday in the Quadragesima, or Quadragesima Sunday, that being the Latin word for forty. In the days of the Church's severer discipline, those who could not fast so long successively were allowed to begin

¹ Collect.

their Lent at earlier periods, so that besides the Sundays they might have other days for refreshment. Thus Quinquagesima, Sexagesima, and Septuagesima Sundays, (so called from being the Sundays nearest to the fiftieth, sixtieth, and seventieth days before Easter, as Quadragesima is to the fortieth,) were to some the beginning of Lent, though their actual time of fasting lasted only forty days.

Now, we all with one accord begin our Lent on Ash-Wednesday, which is forty-six days before Easter ; but the names of these Sundays, and their penitential teaching, are still retained, to recall us to that spirit of contrition and self-discipline with which the holy season of Lent ought always to be approached.

The Lessons for this day all point to the Creation and Re-Creation of the Universe. The First Lessons give us the history of the creation of man in perfect holiness and innocence in the Paradise of Eden. The Second Lessons tell of the completion of the act of Redemption ; of the Church of Christ, the heavenly Jerusalem, purchased by the Blood of the Lamb, and rescued from the miseries of life for the joy of eternity. The contemplation of the two pictures past and future—the beginning of peace and the ending of peace—must make us pause to think of the intervening space, filled with the sin and misery of man, the long-suffering and mercy of God ; it must give us thoughts of the power and majesty of GOD, Who created everything, and, behold, it was very good,¹ and of the degradation and ingratitude of man who marred and still mars that glorious work by his sin. Surely the thought of all the misery that sin

¹ First Morning Lesson, verse 31.

has wrought in the world, and its hatefulness in the sight of God, must work in us repentance ; sorrow, that we have sinned against One Who created the world in love for the happiness of His creatures ; Who will re-create the world corroded by sin,¹ and Who hath found a means of cleansing even polluted man (if only as a penitent he will seek that cleansing) and of making him fit for eternal joy and peace² in the paradise of Heaven. There again shall be found the tree of life, and they who eat thereof shall live for ever in the presence of God.³

Repentance, however, is not an idle feeling, but a work, and a work which, through the mercy of GOD, we need never think it too late to begin. The parable in the Gospel teaches us this. The labourers in the vineyard represent those whom GOD calls into His Church to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. Into this vineyard the heavenly Householder receives us, how, and when He will, some early, some late, according to His good pleasure. The Jews, like those hired at the third hour,⁴ were called in the earlier ages of the world, while the Gentiles were not admitted until a later period. So, also, is it with individuals. Some begin their work at the third hour,⁴ that is, at the time of their baptism, and go on steadily until the evening of their lives. To these the daily work of repentance and self-examination is comparatively light and easy. Some, however, who, having been called in their baptism, have yet hitherto neglected their work, may still, by the mercy of GOD, be saved, even at the eleventh

¹ Second Morning Lesson, verse 1 ;

² verse 4.

³ Genesis, iii. 24, and Second Evening Lesson, verse 2.

⁴ Gospel, verse 3.

hour ; but may we not suppose their repentance to be so much the more difficult and painful, as they have a shorter time in which to perform their work ? They may not, indeed, like the others, have had to bear the "burden and heat"¹ of daily discipline, but the remorse and uncertainty which they bring upon themselves is far more painful than the light and easy yoke which they have rejected. While, therefore, we admire the goodness of Almighty GOD towards those who, perhaps, have not had opportunities and privileges equal to our own, let us see that we learn the lesson which the Church would convey to us this day.

We, who were early admitted into the vineyard, are once again called upon to return from whence we have strayed, and to redouble our diligence in the service of our heavenly Master.

To quicken us in this service, the Epistle compares our Christian life to a race.² By this figure, St. Paul would teach us something of the activity, and zeal, and self-denial, with which Christians should strive for their heavenly crown. The Corinthians, to whom he writes, spared no pains in striving for an earthly prize. They would exercise themselves in a long course of self-discipline to bring their bodies into a fit state for the trial ; and so we Christians, who have to run with patience the heavenly race that is set before us, may learn from their example, that we should, like them, be continually exercising restraint over ourselves,³ our appetites and passions, keeping our bodies, souls, and spirits in a fit state for GOD's service, and each striving with as much diligence as if one only could receive the crown.⁴ Especially, we should avail

¹ Gospel, verse 12.

² verse 25, &c. ;

³ Epistle, verse 24 ;

⁴ verse 24.

ourselves of the holy season which is now approaching, to gain a greater increase of self-mastery,—we should consider what are the besetting sins which most entangle us in our Christian course, what self-indulgence is most dangerous to us, and how we may best exercise self-restraint and self-denial, so as to subdue the flesh to the spirit. So shall we be ready to profit by this opportunity of improvement which is soon to be held out to us.

Thus does the Church begin to prepare us for the holy season of Lent. She sets before us the goodness and long-suffering of GOD, which call us to repentance.¹ She exhorts us not to despise the riches of His grace, but so to turn and judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the LORD. She bids us “run with patience the race that is set before us,”² and so “subdue and mortify the flesh,” that our “spirit may be saved in the day of the LORD JESUS.” (1 Corinthians, v. 5.) She teaches us to pray, not that we should be delivered now from the sorrows which are the just reward of sin in this world, but that by repentance we may be enabled to gain deliverance from the eternal consequence of sin through JESUS CHRIST our Saviour.³

¹ Gospel.

² Cf. Epistle and Hebrews, xii. 1.

³ Collect.



Sexagesima Sunday.

Epistle, 2 Corinthians, xi.

Morning Lesson, Genesis, iii.

^{19.}
Gospel, St. Luke, viii. 4.

Evening Lesson, Genesis, vi.
or viii.

IN order to humble ourselves rightly for sin, we must know something of its nature, its dangers, and its cure.

This, then, is what the Church would teach us to-day. Having called us to repent of our sins, she now shows us what sin is, and who is the author of it; ¹ how our Redeemer has overcome it, and how He enables us to overcome it also. The account of the temptation of our first parents, their sin and their fall, is therefore selected for our Morning Lesson.

From this chapter we learn to trace the source of our misery to that chief of wicked rebellious spirits, the devil. Taking the form of a serpent, we read how he tempted Eve to doubt God's word; finding that she allowed herself to listen to his suggestions, the tempter easily persuaded her to distrust God's goodness also, ² thus destroying at once her faith and love. Without these safeguards to control and regulate her senses, she soon gave way to their evil inclination; and so was committed that first act of disobedience, which brought sin into the world, and death through sin.

Thus, through the fall of our first parents, did man lose the image of his Maker. His body, from being immortal and heavenly, became vile and earthly; his soul, which had been pure and holy,

¹ Morning Lesson;

² verse 5.

became dead in trespasses and sins ; and his will, which had been entirely conformed to the Divine will, became henceforth subject to the influence and control of the evil one. But GOD, in His mercy, did not leave us without hope. Even in the midst of the curses uttered in the Garden of Eden, a Redeemer was promised,¹ Who should restore to fallen man the image he had lost. Through faith in this promised Redeemer, the heirs of the promises had power to be regenerated and restored ; for those who were admitted into the patriarchal and Mosaic covenants by faith looked forward to Him, as we by faith look back. And so has there ever existed a holy society, or Church, to guide and direct the children of Adam in the recovery of their lost privileges.

We, however, of the Christian covenant are admitted into a closer union with Him Whom the others saw but as "through a glass darkly." Cleansed and purified by the waters of baptism, we have been made "temples of the Holy Ghost," and endued with fresh life our bodies will rise again from the tomb glorious and immortal ; so that, by the mercy of GOD, we may regain in CHRIST, the second Adam, even more than we lost through the first. Yet is it not regained without continual struggling and constant danger. Still does our fallen nature cling about us, and still does the devil strive to tempt those whom he once overcame. As children of fallen Adam, therefore, we are open to his attacks, though, as members of a risen Saviour, we have strength to resist them. Of the awful power of Satan in the world, and of his influence over the hearts of men, the remainder of the services gives us abundant proof.

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 15.

In the Evening Lesson we see how soon he led men on from the first act of disobedience to the lowest depths of sin and wickedness.¹ Even the "sons of GOD,"² that is, those who had been taken into covenant with their Maker, fell into the evil practices of the wicked world with which they associated ; and all mankind became so depraved, that nothing less than the judgment of a flood could satisfy the justice of Almighty GOD. Warned by their example, the Church would admonish us at this time, that "except we repent, we shall all likewise perish."

And as in the world, so also in the hearts of men does the devil carry on his wicked work. This is represented to us by a parable in the Gospel for the day.

GOD sows in our hearts the seed of eternal life, just as the sower puts seed into the ground.³ From this seed He expects that we should bring forth fruit, each in different measure, according to our abilities. It is the devil's object to destroy this seed before it is grown up, and so to prevent the good work which GOD would carry on in our souls. Thus he suits his attacks according to our various characters and circumstances. If he sees that we are slothful and careless, taking no pains to understand what we read or hear, immediately he catches out of our hearts the word of salvation.⁴ If, however, we do receive the word, but without gaining from it any fixed principle to act upon, he soon raises up such a temptation as will cause us to fall.⁵ Again, in those whose hearts are divided between GOD and mammon, he works by means of the cares and riches and pleasures of this life,

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 5 ;

² verse 2.

³ Gospel, verse 5 ;

⁴ verse 12 ;

⁵ verse 13.

making them take such entire possession of the heart, as to choke the good seed and holy thoughts which are springing up.¹ Only by watchfulness and prayer, with patience and perseverance, can we hope to resist the attacks of the enemy, and to bring forth fruit in proportion to our privileges. Of these virtues, St. Paul, in the Epistle, sets us a bright example.² He here lays before us the hardships and discipline which he had to undergo as a faithful member of CHRIST. And this he does not as claiming any merit of his own, but only to impress upon his hearers what self-denial and self-devotion are required of those who would overcome the world and triumph over their own passions.

The same teaching may be gathered from the Evening Lessons. Amid the surrounding faithlessness and wickedness, Noah and his family retained their faith and purity. GOD declared His intention of bringing destruction upon the earth; Noah, "moved with fear," obeyed His commands, and persevered in preparing the ark, notwithstanding the mockery and unbelief of his fellow-men. The flood came, and only Noah and his family were saved from perishing in the waters. So were faith, and perseverance in well-doing, rewarded. May we also have faith so to believe the awful denunciations of GOD against sin, that turning to Him in true penitence, and with earnest prayer, we may be borne safely in the ark of CHRIST'S Church, even to the Mount of GOD, the Ararat of Heaven. The deep sense of our own danger, which such thoughts must awaken in us, will lead us to acknowledge, in the words of the Collect, that "we put not our trust in anything that we

¹ Gospel, verse 14.

² Epistle, verses 21-28.

do;" and to rejoice that there is One able and willing to deliver us from all adversity. He has overcome for us, that He might overcome in us. He came to bruise the serpent's head,¹ and He will "recover out of the snares of the devil those who have been taken captive by him at his will." (2 Tim. ii. 26.)



Quinquagesima Sunday.

Epistle, 1 Corinthians, xiii. *Morning Lesson*, Genesis, ix.

Gospel, St. Luke, xviii. 31. ^{1-20.} *Evening Lesson*, Genesis xii. or xiii.

REPENTANCE, to be real, must be known by its fruits. This is the truth which the Church would impress upon us to-day. By choosing "charity"² as the subject with which to close her preparation for Lent, she would remind us that all the exercises of this holy season are "nothing worth,"³ unless the love of GOD be their motive and their end.

Charity, or the love of GOD, and of our neighbour for His sake, is, then, the fruit which GOD expects of His penitent and faithful people.

This temper of mind, which Holy Scripture calls by the name of charity, is therefore described and explained to us in the Epistle for the day.

From what St. Paul here tells us, we learn that charity is produced by the love of GOD, influencing our outward actions. He shows us that the same actions, which without this love profit us

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 15.

² Collect and Epistle.

³ Collect.

nothing, with it make up the Christian rule of charity. Thus we may possess the knowledge of GOD, we may practise self-denial, and even almsgiving,¹ without possessing true charity. These are but a part of the duty, not the whole of it, and may have worldly objects for their end and view; but the holy disposition, which St. Paul calls charity, is of a far higher character. Having the love of GOD for its motive, and the good of man for its end, it regulates the inward disposition as well as the outward conduct. Those who possess it are "kind"² to their brethren, out of love to Him Who is their common Father and their common Saviour. They give to the needy for the sake of Him Who hath said that He will count such gifts as offered unto Himself. Considering His long-suffering unto themselves, they "suffer long"³ with those who have wronged them. The sense of their own sinfulness also makes them humble towards their brethren. "Esteeming others better than themselves," and feeling that they have more than either they desire or deserve, they cannot "envy"⁴ those whose lot is better than their own; and thinking thus lowly of themselves, they will not "easily be provoked"⁵ to "think evil"⁶ of others. Again, regard for GOD's glory makes them grieve over iniquity and rejoice in the truth,⁴ from wheresoever and from whomsoever it may proceed. Faith in GOD's word, and hope in His promises, leads them to "bear all things"⁸ that may be put upon them; even rejoicing, if they are counted worthy to suffer for His Name.

This is the blessed temper which forms the hap-

¹ Epistle, verses 2, 3;

² verse 5;

⁴ verse 6.

³ verse 4;

⁵ verse 7.

piness of the saints in heaven; therefore does GOD train and discipline us in it here, that we may be fitted for the enjoyment of it hereafter. In this life we can exercise it only by the help of faith and hope.¹ We see only as through a glass darkly, and are like children learning that which they cannot yet understand or enjoy. In heaven, faith will be turned into sight, and hope into enjoyment; but the charity, which it should be our aim to cultivate on earth, will there be still our employment and delight. Therefore it is, that while faith, hope, and charity, united, make up the Christian's life, the "greatest of these" is said to be charity.

To train us in the attainment of this heavenly temper, the holy season of Lent is an especial means. We are now called upon to mortify self, that we may glorify GOD, and to deny ourselves that we may give to others; while at the same time we are taught that all our self-denials will be worse than useless, if they should lead us to think the better of ourselves or the worse of our neighbours.

The exercise of this divine temper is, however, far above the strength of fallen man. It is reckoned in Scripture as the first fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22,)—the chief of those signs by which we may know whether we are counted living or dead before GOD.² Charity being, therefore, the work of the Spirit, must be the subject of prayer, as in to-day's Collect. To keep alive this love of GOD in our hearts, the thought of His love to us must be the subject of our constant meditation. "We love Him because He first loved us," (1 St. John, iv. 19,) and we "walk in

¹ Epistle, verse 13.

² Collect.

love" with our brethren, even "as CHRIST also hath loved us, and given Himself for us." (Eph. v. 2.)

To the remembrance of His wondrous love and passion, therefore, does the remainder of the services turn our thoughts. The covenant of mercy through the merits of our Redeemer, which was renewed first to Noah,¹ and then to Abraham,² is a preparation for the closer contemplation of His sufferings in the Gospel for to-day. Here do we behold our divine Saviour, the "brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person," going to suffer pain, reproach, and shame, for our sakes.³ Knowing all things that should come upon Him, He voluntarily gives Himself up to be "wounded for our iniquities, and bruised for our sins," in order that "by His stripes we" may be "healed."

When we have thought and dwelt upon this unspeakable mercy, surely we can consider nothing too grievous to suffer for His sake, or too difficult to do in obedience to Him. Like Abraham, we shall be ready to give up the good things of this life for the sake of others; to deny ourselves that our neighbour may be benefited.⁴ Like Abraham, we shall be ready to go out into the heavenly Canaan, whither He is leading us,⁵ following Him through evil report and good report, until we come to the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is GOD; and, like Noah, we shall gladly conform to any rules of abstinence or restraint which are to keep alive the remembrance of a Crucified Saviour.⁶ But in the midst of the

¹ Morning Lesson.

² Evening Lesson.

³ Gospel, verses 32, 33. ⁴ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 9.

⁵ Evening Lesson, verse 1. ⁶ Morning Lesson, verse 4.

high aims and holy resolutions which this season especially calls forth, the history of the blind man in the Gospel leads us back to the spirit of penitence and humility in which they should be undertaken. Feeling ourselves to be poor and miserable, and blind and naked, we now come to Him, crying, "JESUS, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us."¹ He commands us to be brought to Him.² It is His will that we should follow Him, and glorify GOD. When we are brought near to Him through penitence and devotion, He heals our blindness, He strengthens our weakness, and gives us grace to follow Him in the way.

*Lent.*

THE observance of the Lent, or spring, fast, is of very ancient date. We know from the writings of those who lived nearly at the same time as the apostles, that a season of fasting always preceded the commemoration of our Blessed LORD's Passion. Afterwards, the length of this fast came to be fixed at forty days, in remembrance of His fasting in the wilderness. This, then, is the forty days' fast which we still observe, and of which Ash Wednesday is the first day. During this season Christians are required to withdraw from outward things as much as their daily tasks will allow, in order to give themselves up to meditation, and fasting, and prayer. Fasting is a duty commanded by our Blessed LORD Himself, and is therefore binding upon all His members. Entire fasting during the whole forty days is not

¹ Gospel, verse 38 ;² verse 40.

of course within human power, but the duty of fasting as far as our different constitutions will admit, is certainly intended to form a part of the exercise of this holy season, and is an especial help to our spiritual advancement. By denying our bodies their accustomed food, we show our sense of our own sinfulness, and of our utter unworthiness to partake of GOD's good creatures; we put down our selfish appetites, and we gain such a victory over the flesh as will bring us so much the nearer to communing with GOD in the spirit. Some, however, there are, who, from the state of their health or other circumstances, are not allowed this privilege of fasting. Such persons may yet observe the holy season of Lent by the practice of continual abstinence or restraint. By abstaining from pleasant food they may show their sorrow for sin, and their desire for self-mortification; they may forego some selfish gratification in order to have the more to offer to CHRIST and His poor; or some portion of their time, which they had been accustomed to consider their own, they may spend in the service of GOD. Abstinence from sin being the great object of this holy season, any means by which we triumph over our sinful nature will prove both useful and profitable to us. Such a use of Lent will prepare us for the contemplation of the great act of Redemption which is commemorated at the close of this Holy Season. By self-examination, and by the struggle against sin and evil habits which must be specially carried on through Lent, we shall by GOD's grace come to a knowledge of our sinfulness and our weakness, and therefore to a conviction of the necessity for us of a Saviour and Redeemer.

So shall we be able, with deeper thankfulness

and humility, to commemorate the awful act of Redemption on Good Friday, and to rise with more joy and hope on Easter-day, the great Festival of the Resurrection. Then, as we approach the table of the LORD on that day with perhaps a deeper sense of our own sinfulness and weakness, but with a stronger and keener sense of GOD's mercy and power, and are made one with our Saviour in His Holy Communion, we may depart with a joyous hope of our own resurrection to eternal life through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.



Ash Wednesday.

For the Epistle, Joel, ii. 12. Morning Lessons, Isaiah, lviii. 1-13; Mark, ii. 13-23.
Gospel, St. Matthew, vi. 16. Evening Lessons, Jonah, iii.; Hebrews, xii. 3-18.
(Commination Service.)
Proper Psalms, vi., xxxii., xxxviii., cii., cxxx., cxliii.



ASH WEDNESDAY, or the first day in Lent, has always been observed with peculiar strictness. Its name comes from a custom which prevailed amongst the early Christians, of sprinkling ashes upon their heads, or lying in sackcloth and ashes, to show their sorrow and contrition. On this day all grievous sinners were excluded from the Church, only to be restored again to their privileges after a long course of penitence and trial. This custom is now no longer practised, and all penitents of every degree are allowed to join the Church's general voice of penitential sorrow. Still, however, it is the "wish" of the Church that "the said discipline

should be restored," and until this can be the case, she has provided the use of a service which so comes home to the hearts of all men, as to awaken in the conscience of each a sense of his own particular guilt. Such a service is the Commination, or threatening of GOD's judgments against sinners.

The solemn preface with which this service opens explains to us its use and meaning. It shows that the Commination, like the ancient discipline, is intended to cure the guilty, and to warn the innocent. First, GOD's curses against sin are denounced, and all men are commanded to acknowledge their justice by a solemn "Amen." Thus does each one try himself by his own words. Those who have committed the crime will see the necessity of repentance and amendment in order to salvation; while those who have hitherto been kept from it will consider the paths that lead to it, that they may check the very first beginning of it in themselves. Then GOD's minister is directed to call us to repentance in words taken entirely from Holy Scripture.¹ By the awfulness and certainty of GOD's judgments here set before us, our resolutions against sin are strengthened, and our hopes confirmed by the promise of His mercy, through our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

Thus we are moved to godly sorrow, in order that we may be led on to true repentance; for repentance is to forsake sin as well as to be sorry for it; to do "the things which GOD says," as well as to cry unto Him, "LORD, LORD!" The life of the true penitent described at the end of this address is, then, to be our aim and standard; by it we must search and try our ways, that we may know whether our sorrow is that which

¹ Exhortation in the Commination Service.

worketh repentance, or the sorrow of the world which worketh death. All who remember their continual sins of omission, as well as commission, will be ready to apply to themselves the contrite words of David's penitential Psalm.¹ After the Versicles, or short Litany, which follow this Psalm, the priest prays for absolution upon all those who confess the sins of which their consciences accuse them; he then implores GOD's mercy upon them; and, thus prepared, the people are allowed to open their own lips and plead their own pardon. If only their hearts go along with their words, they cannot but be fitted to receive the concluding blessing which the Church pronounces in the most holy Name and words of GOD Himself.

The remainder of the services are framed in the same spirit, encouraging us to repentance, and teaching us how to repent. Thus, the opening of the Collect expresses a full trust in GOD's mercy, showing us that as our Creator, He "hateth nothing that He hath made;" as our Redeemer, He "forgives the sins of all them that are penitent." For a contrite or penitent heart, therefore, we pray, that we may be able to make right use of our Lenten fast, for "Is not this the fast that GOD hath chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness."² Yes, at the call of our Saviour to be ready, like Levi,³ to leave all—our most cherished sins—our most loved companions (if they are leading us astray)—our highest ambitions—that we may take up our Cross and follow in our Saviour's steps.

But we must beware lest our repentance be merely outward show or a momentary sentiment

¹ Psalm li.

² First Morning Lesson, verse 6.

³ Second Morning Lesson, verse 14.

like that of Esau.¹ It must come from conviction of the heart, and be shown in amendment of life if we would make it acceptable in the sight of GOD and through His mercy win our pardon as did the fasting Ninevites of old.²

In the Epistle, Joel exhorts the Jews to testify their inward penitence by outward marks of contrite sorrow; the priests interceding for the sins of the people, and the people turning to the LORD "with weeping, and with fasting, and with mourning."³ And to all congregations who in the same way are moved to true repentance, may we not hope that He will in like manner "return and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him?"⁴

In the Gospel we have our Saviour's own instructions as to the duty and manner of fasting. By cautioning us against hypocrisy He would teach us that outward fasting is acceptable to GOD only so far as it really proceeds from a broken and contrite heart; and so do His blessed words afford a lesson to all who are in any measure striving to enter upon the duties of this holy season. If in our poor attempts at fasting or abstinence we can discover any degree of self-satisfaction, any desire to be seen of men, anything short of simple devotion to GOD, we must beware lest we fall into the condemnation of those who in this life only have their reward.⁵

To help us in the devotional exercises of this day, six of David's penitential Psalms are appointed to be used in the usual order, the seventh having been reserved for the Communion service.

All these Psalms begin in a mournful strain, and

¹ Second Evening Lesson, verse 17.

² First Evening Lesson, verse 10. ³ Epistle, verse 12;

⁴ verse 14.

⁵ Gospel, verse 16.

end with hope and joyful trust. This is to teach us that sorrow for sin must always precede peace and joy. The duties of Lent must go before the joys of Easter, and the troubles of this life must be passed before we arrive at a happy eternity. We must "sow in tears" before we can "reap in joy." (Psalm cxxvi. 5.)

In the first part of the 6th Psalm the penitent is suffering under a fearful sense of the Divine vengeance. He pleads his own sorrow¹ and GOD's mercy² as his only hope of forgiveness; but after a strong resolution to break off from all iniquity,³ he is enabled to express a firm and joyful hope in the assistance of a Divine Saviour.⁴

In the 32nd Psalm, David proclaims the blessedness of those whose "unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." Remembering his own repentance, and GOD's consequent goodness to him,⁵ he wishes that all might follow his example, that they might also obtain a like benefit.⁶ If, then, we turn to GOD now when He may be found, and take refuge in the place which He hath provided for us to hide in,⁷ He will "teach us in the way wherein we should go,"⁸ and finally put into our mouths the joyful words with which David ends this holy Psalm.⁹

In the 38th Psalm, David is speaking of sin as a deadly disease, which is to the soul what common diseases are to the body.¹⁰ From it he prays to be delivered, imploring that GOD would chasten but not consume him. Oppressed by the weight of his sorrow and the strength of his sin, he trusts for

¹ Psalm vi. verses 2, 3 ;

² verse 4 ;

³ verse 8 ;

⁴ verses 9, 10.

⁵ Psalm xxxii. verse 6 ;

⁶ verse 7 ;

⁷ verse 8 ;

⁸ verse 9 ;

⁹ verse 12.

¹⁰ Psalm xxxviii. verse 7.

support to the salvation which cometh of GOD only.¹ In reading this Psalm, we should remember that the sufferings here described have all been undergone for us by Him Who knew no sin. May this thought increase our hatred of sin, and quicken our desires of amendment!

The expressions in the 102nd and 130th Psalms are those of an afflicted and contrite soul, mourning over sin, and putting its whole trust in the merits of a Divine Redeemer.

The 143rd Psalm, being the last of those called penitential, is intended to carry us on a step higher in our course of repentance. By uniting holy purposes for the future with sorrow for the past, it would lead us on to the great lesson which it is the object of this solemn day to teach us. Thus we first pray that GOD would not "enter into judgment"² with us, and then we seek His grace to do the thing that pleaseth Him.³ We beg to be turned out of the paths of sin, and then we pray that we may be led forth into the land of righteousness.⁴

We have now been supplied with motives and exhortations to repent, as well as with words by which to express our penitence. May we have grace to make good use of these blessed helps! May this holy season find us turning to the LORD, not only by the outward afflictions of the body, but by the inward humbling of our souls before God! With "new and contrite hearts" may we "submit ourselves unto Him, and from henceforth walk in His ways."⁴ The merciful LORD will "in no wise cast out" (St. John, vi. 37) those who so come to Him; for He looks graciously

¹ Psalm xxxviii. verse 15.

² Psalm cxliii. verse 2;

verse 10.

⁴ Exhortation in Communion Service.

upon them that are of a poor and contrite spirit, and that tremble at His word. (Isaiah, lxvi. 2.) He is gracious and merciful, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 St. Peter, iii. 9.)

*First Sunday in Lent.*

Epistle, 2 Corinthians, vi. 1. *Morning Lesson*, Genesis, xix.
12-30.
Gospel, St. Matthew, iv. 1. *Evening Lesson*, Genesis, xxii.
1-20, or xxiii.

HE Sundays in Lent are not fasts, for the LORD'S Day can never be observed otherwise than with holy joy; yet, as they are intended to furnish us with meditations throughout the week, their services all speak to us of repentance and fasting.

The great design of Lent is to help us to forsake sin and overcome temptation. Having lately seen how we were made subject to sin and temptation through the weakness of Adam, we are now to be taught how we may rise above it by the power of CHRIST. The temptation of our Blessed Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST is therefore set before us as a fit subject for our meditation during Lent, and is especially brought before us in the services for this day.

The Gospel gives us the details of this wonderful part of our LORD'S history; and from the Collect we learn that what He then underwent was endured "for our sakes." That He might comfort us by His sympathy, and instruct us by His example,

our Blessed Redeemer condescended for a time to lay aside His divine power, and be "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. iv. 15.) He Himself also suffered being tempted, that He might be able to succour them that are tempted. (Heb. ii. 18.) And thus has our Divine Master not only conquered for us, but He has given to us, His members, grace to conquer with Him. By resisting the enemy in those very points in which he most assails us, our SAVIOUR has taught us how we also may overcome his attacks. He struggled for us against the temptations of the world¹ and the flesh,² that when the devil works against us by these means, we may have His blessed example to observe and follow. Thus we read that "the lusts of the flesh" were the means by which the devil first began to tempt CHRIST our LORD. Taking occasion from the hunger of our Blessed Saviour, he endeavoured to persuade Him to work a miracle for the satisfying of His bodily appetite, and so to distrust the providence of GOD. In like manner does the evil one tempt us when we are over-careful for the things of this life, taking "anxious thought for what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed;" "careful and troubled about many things," which must perish in the using, rather than about the one thing needful which can never be taken away from us. To resist such a temptation we must apply, as our Saviour did, to the Word of GOD. From it we shall learn "not to labour for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." (St. John, vi. 27.)

From distrusting the providence of GOD, the

¹ Gospel, verse 8 ;

² verse 3.

devil would lead our LORD to the opposite sin of presuming upon it. He would have Him tempt the Divine providence by exposing Himself to unnecessary danger.¹ And do not we fall into the same snare when we think ourselves so high in the divine grace and favour as to neglect the duty of continual watchfulness and precaution? To such the Scripture would say, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." It is by spiritual presumption that we tempt the LORD our GOD.

Again was Satan allowed to make one more attack upon our Blessed LORD through the "lust of the eyes and the pride of life."² (See 1 St. John, ii. 16.) These are also the favourite instruments by which the devil seeks to devour the souls of men. Knowing our different tastes and characters, he sets before us the particular object which is most likely to tempt us, making it appear pleasant and good. To some he promises worldly honours and greatness, to others worldly praise or admiration, to all worldly ease and self-indulgence, if they will be his servants and commit sin. Here, again, the Word of GOD comes in for our instruction, teaching us to worship the LORD our GOD, and serve Him only, and asking what it would profit us were we to gain the whole world and lose our own souls?

We see, then, that as long as we are in the flesh the devil will use the works of the flesh to destroy in us the works of the Spirit; and that he must be resisted by the Word of GOD, by fasting and prayer.

Humbly endeavouring to follow the footsteps of our most Holy LORD, we must, in the words of

¹ Gospel, verse 6;

² verses 8, 9.

the Collect, "use such abstinence" as will "subdue" or make obedient our flesh to the Spirit, and so leave to the devil a weaker hold over us. We must not however expect that while engaged in the exercises of this holy season, he will flee from us altogether ; on the contrary we are sometimes the most tempted during seasons of abstinence and mortification ; for as the devil tempted our Saviour while fasting in the wilderness, so he now tempts those whom he sees to be using most active measures against him. Fasting, and watching, and prayer, do not take us out of temptation, but they give us strength to bear up against it ; they procure for us increasing strength in proportion to the increasing temptation, according to the promise, that "as our days so shall our strength be." (Deut. xxxiii. 25.)

Let, however, we should think the example of our Blessed LORD too high and holy to aim at, the Epistle turns our eyes to that of the apostles. It shows us how men of like passions with ourselves were able to overcome by the Blood of the Lamb, serving the LORD in stripes and imprisonments, in watchings, and fastings, and labours.¹ To the former of these we may never be called ; yet the sufferings and self-denials of these holy men will be a profitable subject for our meditation at this time. It will make us feel how very far short we now come in the duties of abstinence and self-discipline and quicken us to a more diligent performance of them. But there is also another reason why this Epistle and Gospel are selected for the service of this day. We are now entering upon the Spring Ember week, when many amongst us are preparing to enter the sacred ministry of CHRIST

¹ Epistle, verses 4, 5.

by receiving holy orders. The Church, taking example from Him who underwent forty days' fast before entering upon His ministry, appoints this time for remembering, with fasting and prayer, those who are about to undertake the sacred office. Our thoughts are therefore directed to the labours and fastings of the apostles, that, bearing in mind the labours and responsibilities of those who watch for our souls, we may be so much the more diligent in offering up prayers in their behalf.

In the Lessons of the day three pictures are given us from the life of the Patriarch Abraham. The destruction of the cities of the plain; the sacrifice of Isaac; and the death of Sarah. Throughout these, we are able to trace the special teaching of the season. The awful wrath of God against impenitent sinners is shown in the destruction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim;¹ a warning to us to "flee from the wrath to come;" while God's mercy to Lot and his family, and His gracious answer to Lot's prayer,² seem to encourage us in our struggle against the temptations of the world in which we are placed.

The peaceful end of the aged and faithful Sarah³ seems intended as a contrast with the awful destruction of the disobedient wife of Lot;⁴ and from her long life of patience, and her death-bed of peace we gather lessons of faith and trust in the All-wise.

The sacrifice of Isaac, related in the Evening Lesson, as a type of the sacrifice of CHRIST, finds a fitting place in our meditations at this holy season. The innocence of the intended victim, his silent acquiescence to his father's commands,

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 25;

² verse 21.

³ Alt. Evening Lesson.

⁴ Morning Lesson, verse 26.

his bearing of the wood on which he was to be sacrificed,¹ all seem to foreshadow exactly the great act by which the human race was to be redeemed by the sinless Son of GOD. Abraham's own conduct in the matter affords us an example of implicit trust in the wisdom of GOD's commands, while his willingness to give up his only son, the child of his old age, the centre of all his hopes, teaches us a lesson of self-denial and strength of purpose which should be most useful to us in our Lenten work. "May GOD give us grace to use such abstinence" and self-denial, "that our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey His godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, Who livest and reignest with the Father and the HOLY GHOST, one GOD, world without end."²



Second Sunday in Lent.

<i>Epistle</i> , 1 Thessalonians, iv. 1.	<i>Morning Lesson</i> , Genesis, xxvii. 1-41.
<i>Gospel</i> , St. Matthew, xv. 21.	<i>Evening Lesson</i> , Genesis, xxviii. or xxxii.

IN last Sunday's services we learnt something of the struggle which is ever going on between our bodies and our souls. We saw how the flesh is continually lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; how the corruptible body is continually pressing down the soul, leading it away from holy things.

To keep the body in temperance, soberness, and chastity, a ready instrument in GOD's service, is

Evening Lesson, verse 6.

² Collect.

therefore urged upon us this day, as the great duty of a Christian's life. It is enforced upon us in the Epistle;¹ while the Gospel and Collect encourage us to make it the subject of our constant prayers.

St. Paul begins the portion of his Epistle which we read to-day, by an exhortation so to walk as to please GOD more and more; and as one means of more effectually doing the divine will, he desires that we should keep our vessel in sanctification and honour.² To understand this expression, we must remember that by baptism our bodies were sanctified and made holy. The Holy Spirit Who then condescended to dwell in them has vouchsafed to call them temples or vessels for Himself. They are, therefore, to be kept "as vessels sanctified and meet for the Master's use," (2 Tim. ii. 21,) ready and prepared for every good work. As a vessel, then, should be continually kept pure and clean, in order to be ready for service when called for, so must we be continually mortifying those "members upon earth" (Col. iii. 5) which might unfit us for the service of GOD. Remembering that GOD "hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness"³ we must "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in His fear." Sloth, intemperance, vanity, and a love of ease and pleasure, are amongst those lusts of the flesh which, if suffered to grow up, would defile, and in time destroy, the temple of GOD; and these must be continually subdued and kept in check, if we would present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto GOD. (Rom. xii. 1.)

The portions of Scripture appointed for the day

¹ Epistle, verses 3, 4, 7;

² verse 4; ³ verse 7.

give us lessons and warnings from the lives of Jacob and Esau.

From Jacob we learn eagerness after the blessing of GOD, while we are warned against seeking it with intemperance or impatience, and using unholy means to attain even the holiest ends.

In the Morning Lesson we read of the deceit practised by Jacob to obtain the birthright and blessing, which was indeed justly his, as the sale of his birthright by Esau was a well-known and public transaction.¹

Then we follow Jacob through a portion of the life-long punishment which was the reward of the duplicity of his youth; his banishment from a home he loved so well, from a dying father and a tender mother;² his long labours for Laban; the deceit with which he was treated by his uncle; the trembling return into his own country.³ All teaching us how truly sin works out its own reward; but teaching us also that GOD will often purify the souls of His chosen, but erring, children on earth, by the infliction of calamities and sorrows; so that, punished in this world and purified in the furnace of affliction, they may be saved from the wrath to come, and enter hereafter into His peace.

At the same time we must remember that though GOD punishes His faithful servants, it is as a loving father who chastises his child for its own good. So GOD appeared to Jacob on his way into banishment to declare His purpose of blessing him;⁴ and again appeared to him on his return to Canaan to renew the promise, at the same time making trial of the perseverance and faith of His servant.⁵

¹ Genesis, xxv. 30.

² Evening Lesson, verse 5.

³ Alt. Evening Lesson.

⁴ Evening Lesson, verse 13.

⁵ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 24.

But for Esau, the faithless one, the despiser of his birthright, the man who preferred the good things of this life to all the promises of GOD for the future, there were no visions of comfort and peace. Esau regretted indeed the earthly blessings he had lost, and his cry was exceeding bitter;¹ but he did not bewail the heavenly privileges which he had forfeited. He lived by the sword as he wished, and indeed attained to some earthly prosperity, but he died unblessed, and the depredations and sins of his posterity, still bring to mind the "profanity"² of him who despised his birthright and preferred satisfying his own lusts to inheriting the promises of GOD.

While, then, we endeavour to avoid the careless profanity of the elder brother, let us learn the hopeful faith of the younger; and while we try to shun that timid mistrust of GOD'S wisdom—the hastiness that could not "tarry the LORD'S leisure"—which marked the character of Jacob, well will it be for us, if we come to a sense of our own powerlessness, and learn to seek strength in our temptations, and protection in our dangers, from Him who declared Himself to be the GOD of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. As GOD, then, was willing to be conquered by the wrestling of the faithful son of His chosen family, so is He still willing to be overcome by the fervent prayers of the children of His Church.

He bids us use means for our safety; the power to preserve us He keeps in His own hands, and wields it in answer to our prayers.

Like her whose cure we read of in the Gospel,³ we have an unclean spirit struggling within us,

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 34.

² Hebrews, xii. 16.

³ Gospel, verse 22.

who will yield to nothing but the mighty power of CHRIST. To Him, therefore, we must come, saying, "LORD, help me !" He may not at first seem to hear us ; He may see fit to test our perseverance by not at once granting, to our exercises of devotion, the benefit we expect ; still we must cry after Him, and our repentance, and fasting, and prayer, will in time procure from Him a gracious answer. He will "keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls,"¹ converting our bodies into what he once made them, and intended they should be, vessels fitted for GOD's mercy, and enabling us to glorify GOD in our body and in our spirit, which are GOD's. (1 Cor. vi. 20.)



Third Sunday in Lent.

Epistle, Ephesians, v. 1.

Morning Lesson, Genesis,
xxxvii.

Gospel, St. Luke, xi. 14.

Evening Lesson, Genesis,
xxxix. or xl.

THE spiritual warfare in which we are engaged is a difficult and arduous one. Not only have we to fight against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness and works of darkness. If it is our hearty desire to carry on this warfare, if we exercise our own will to do it, then we may be sure of GOD's help.

Through this mighty struggle nothing can safely carry us but the mighty power of GOD, which we pray for in the Collect, under the figurative expres-

¹ Collect.

sion of the "defence of His right hand." But while the second part of the Collect thus provides us with words to frame our petition, the first part reminds us how much its success will depend upon the state of our own hearts. Before we offer up this prayer we must, therefore, examine ourselves as to whether our "desires" are such as we can beseech Almighty GOD "mercifully to look upon." If our hearts are not whole with Him, our petition will be but an empty form of words; but if our struggles against sin are as strong as the words in which we pray to be delivered from it, then may we hope that His right hand will be stretched forth to defend us against all our enemies.¹

Thus armed, we must go out to fight against those works of darkness² of which the Epistle speaks. The devil, who is the prince of darkness, will be continually working in them, and through them, to entice us into his wicked ways.

These, then, are the enemies which Christians must overcome in the Name of Him Who is fighting for them. At our baptism, when we were made sons of GOD and children of light, there was given to us "power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh." (Baptismal Service.)

It remains for us to use this power as we ought. If we would live as children and followers of GOD, we must "walk in love as CHRIST also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us;"³ and, if we would continue children of light, we must avoid all fellowship with works of darkness. By this the apostle would teach us that it is not enough to abstain from gross and grievous sins; for into these we may never perhaps be tempted to fall. To be

¹ Collect.² Epistle, verse 11;³ verse 2.

"true children of the light and of the day," we must avoid every approach to vice or crime. Remembering what we have been made, Whose we are, and Whom we serve, we must, as much as possible, avoid hearing and seeing evil things, or being unnecessarily in the company of those who practise them ; while, at the same time, we should so regulate our own lives and conversations that nothing corrupt may proceed out of our mouth, but only that which is good and edifying.¹

It is by thus letting our light shine before men, that we shall best reprove the works of darkness ;² by thus "fighting in the Name of the LORD," that we shall best repel the "enemies that compass us round about."

The Gospel for the day gives us some idea of the power of the evil one, and of the manner in which he is allowed to use it. "As a strong man armed,"³ he vigilantly keeps those whom he has once made his spoil, until CHRIST, "the stronger,"⁴ rescues them from his grasp. When, by the purifying of baptism, or the after-training of discipline and penitential sorrow, CHRIST has driven out from us the evil spirit, then are we, like the chamber which was "swept and garnished,"⁵ ready and prepared for every good work, but open also to the attacks of the evil one. If we strive by prayer and watchfulness to keep the Holy Spirit in our hearts, then we may hope that He will dwell in us and abide with us for ever ; but if we remain "unfurnished with good works," Satan will find ample room for exercising his evil purposes towards us.

Such is the warning with which the Church addresses us in the midst of this penitential season.

¹ Epistle, verses 4-12 ;

² Gospel, verse 21 ;

⁴ verse 22 ;

³ verse 11.

⁵ verse 25.

By the help of CHRIST our LORD we have been endeavouring to cast out the unclean spirit of sin and wickedness. We may perhaps have overcome him in one point, but let us not, for that, be off our guard; for, if he has been driven out in one quarter, he will return in another; if he sees us less inclined to one sin he will take that very moment to beset us in another. And should he return and take possession when our Blessed LORD had enabled us to overcome him, our last error is indeed worse than the first; ¹ "it had been better for us not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after we have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto us." (2 St. Peter, ii. 21.)

In the Lessons of the day we have an example of sin yielded to—its growth and its result—and of temptation resisted, the unclean spirit cast out.

Joseph was the best loved of the sons of Jacob,² and, like his father, he seems in his youth to have shown that pious longing for the promises and blessings of GOD which was lacking in his brethren.

GOD showed His favour towards him, as He had done towards Jacob, by speaking to him in visions. The ten brothers were jealous, not only of the favour shown to Joseph, but of the uprightness of the youth, which seemed a rebuke to their own carelessness. Jealousy grew into hatred,³ hatred led them on to murder; ⁴ for though, providentially, they were saved from the act, none the less were they fratricides in intention. Lies and deceit⁵ were the further development of their sin, and we are left to imagine the miserable state of conscience-stricken remorse in which they lived for years, till the expression of it bursts forth, with a tone of

¹ Gospel, verse 26.

² Morning Lesson, verse 3;

³ verse 4;

⁴ verse 20;

⁵ verses 31, 32.

repentance, when they found themselves prisoners in Egypt, and recognized in their calamity the punishment of their sin.¹ The Evening Lesson shows us Joseph in prosperity, away from the restraints of his father's home, in a land of strangers and idolaters, still strong in his faith and in his desire to serve his GOD. Temptation came, with all the allurements of secrecy, and perhaps with the extra inducement that, through yielding, was a road to power; but he knew that to yield was to offend GOD. "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against GOD?"² he said; and fled from temptation. The immediate reward seemed to be calamity and adversity, yet his prison turned out to be the gateway to eminence, not, indeed, through human agency, but by the special Providence of GOD.³ The Father Whom he had served secretly did indeed reward him openly both by prosperity in this life, and a bright hope of glory in the life to come. May we have grace to follow in his steps, and through good report and evil report serve and please Him Who shall be our defence against all our enemies.

¹ Genesis, xlii. 21.

² Evening Lesson, verse 9.

³ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 23.



Fourth Sunday in Lent.

Epistle, Galatians, iv. 21.
Gospel, St. John, vi.

Morning Lesson, Genesis, xlii.
Evening Lesson, Genesis, xliii.
or xlv.

HITHERTO, in the services of this penitential season, the Church has been speaking to us of sin and punishment; now, following in the footsteps of Him, Who in the midst of judgment remembers mercy, she would speak to us of mercy and of pardon. This is why the fourth Sunday in Lent, or Mid-Lent Sunday, is also called the Sunday of refreshment.

On this day penitent sinners, who have been brought to a sense of their sins and of the punishment due to them, are comforted with the assurance that they shall be "relieved"¹ through the mercy of JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

The Collect, therefore, prays for the comforts of His grace. The Epistle shows how we are admitted to a share of those comforts through the Gospel covenant; while the other portions of Scripture selected for this day represent our LORD JESUS CHRIST dispensing them to us in His own appointed way.

To explain to us the full extent of our privileges as members of the Christian covenant, the apostle makes use of an allegory, or figure of speech.² The two wives of Abraham represent the two covenants of the Law and of the Gospel. Hagar, the Egyptian, being a slave, is a fit emblem of the Law which tied men down to the ceremonial

¹ Collect.

² Epistle, verses 23, 24.

observances of Moses. Her son is, therefore, a type of those ordinances in which men served GOD only as having received the spirit of bondage to fear. (Rom. viii. 15.) But in Sarah, the free woman, we see an emblem of the Christian Church, whose children, having been released from this bondage, have received the spirit of adoption, and been admitted into the privileges of "sons of GOD."

Thus, as it was with the type, so also was it with that which it represented.

When the son of the free woman was born, the son of the bond woman was cast out to make way for him.¹ When, in the fulness of time, CHRIST came to redeem His people, the ceremonial observances of the Law were cast out to make way for the merciful terms of the Gospel covenant. The Law had been their schoolmaster to bring them to CHRIST; when CHRIST came, there was no more need of a schoolmaster; He Himself undertook to conduct them, through means and ordinances of his own appointment, to that heavenly Jerusalem above, which is the end and object of all our hopes.

So it is that from servants we became sons, and, if sons, then heirs of GOD through CHRIST; no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household and family of GOD; and with the innumerable company of angels, and spirits of just men made perfect, we hope to come to the city of the living GOD, the heavenly "Jerusalem."²

Such are the blessings with which our Blessed Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST refreshes the penitent and faithful members of the Christian

¹ Epistle, verse 30;

² verse 26.

covenant. We have now to see how He dispenses them. Of this the portion of Old Testament history which we read to-day affords a lively emblem. Joseph was in many ways a type of our LORD. His dealings towards his sinful brethren may therefore give us some idea of CHRIST's dealings with those sinful but repenting creatures whom He has been pleased to call His brethren.

First, Joseph tries his brethren by a long course of severe discipline;¹ so does the LORD chasten those whom He loves, and scourge those whom He receives. Joseph's brethren prove that they have come to a better mind, by their self-accusation,² and their tender care of Benjamin;³ by turning from their wicked ways, and amending their lives, sinners prove that they have truly repented of their wickedness and are sorry for their sin.

Joseph, seeing the sincerity of his brethren's sorrow, invites them to come unto him;⁴ so does CHRIST mercifully call unto Him all that labour and are heavy laden with the burden of sin.

Still the remembrance of past transgressions cannot all at once be blotted out. The brethren of Joseph are afraid to stand before the man, for their conscience makes them fearful and trembling;⁵ only when they are repeatedly urged by the steward of Joseph's house do they venture to sit at his table, and eat and drink in his presence; so are penitent sinners repeatedly invited and urged by the stewards of CHRIST's mysteries; before they venture to eat of His bread and drink of His cup.

Joseph, however, does not yet declare himself to

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 7, &c. ; ² verse 21 ;

³ verse 37.

⁴ Evening Lesson, verse 16 ;

⁵ verse 18.

his brethren ; they could not all at once bear the sight of him whom they had once so highly offended ; no more could we, all at once, bear the sight of Him Whom we have crucified afresh and put to an open shame. CHRIST, therefore, looks upon us with mercy, and waits, that He may be gracious unto us, just as Joseph yearned towards his brethren ;¹ but He does not open our eyes to behold His visible presence. He makes us commune with Him by faith ; leading us to Himself by prayer and Holy Communion here, that He may fit us for beholding Him with "open face" hereafter. Then when the day shall come when we shall see Him with our eyes, and His mouth shall speak with us,² we shall be comforted as well as troubled at His presence. Though we shall come before Him with all our sins, yet we shall bring our repentance and pardon also. His death, in which we had a share, will, by His wondrous mercy, be made the means to preserve us unto everlasting life ;³ and He Who has refreshed and comforted us on earth will load us with the good things of His kingdom, and call us to the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven.

From the type we turn to the reality, and in the Gospel we behold our Blessed LORD and Saviour providing for the wants of His disciples, and distributing to them in their necessity.⁴ As He provides for the bodies so does He also for the souls of men. He calls men to Him ; and by the hands of His Apostles and their commissioned successors, He strengthens and refreshes their fainting souls. We know not how by the use of small outward

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 30.

² Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 12 ;

³ verse 5.

⁴ Gospel, verse 11.

elements He sustains the vast multitude that call upon His Name, any more than they in this Gospel knew how their bodies had been nourished and supported by such apparently scanty provisions. Only we must do as they did. Without questioning His power, we must come before Him in the order He has commanded,¹ and use the means He has prescribed, and we shall receive the benefit they experienced. As surely as our LORD sustained the natural lives of the fainting multitude, so surely will He "preserve our bodies and souls unto everlasting life."

We learn, then, on this day that our merciful LORD will in no wise cast out those who come to Him,—that "He satisfieth the empty soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness," (Psalm cvii. 9,) and that if we sincerely "hunger and thirst after righteousness, we shall be filled." (St. Matt. v. 6.)

*Fifth Sunday in Lent.*

OR PASSION SUNDAY.

Epistle, Hebrews, ix. 11.
Gospel, St. John, viii. 46.

Morning Lesson, Exodus, iii.
Evening Lesson, Exodus, v.
or vi. 1-14.

THIS is called Passion Sunday, and the week which follows it is called Passion Week, because from this day until Good Friday the Church turns our thoughts entirely to the death and passion of our Blessed Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

Having shown us our sinfulness,² and refreshed

¹ Gospel, verse 10.

² First three Sundays in Lent.

us with the hope of His mercy,¹ she now points to the one great Sacrifice on which depend all our hopes of pardon, and promises of comfort.

To explain to us the merits of this Sacrifice, the Epistle looks back to the sacrifices of the Jewish law. The Jewish law taught mankind that without shedding of blood there could be no remission. The Lamb of GOD had indeed been accepted as a sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; but until He came, in the Person of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, to make good the sacrifice, His death was typified or represented by that of innocent animals.² Once every year, therefore, the high priest was commanded to enter the holy place with a bullock and a goat; the former to be offered for his own sins, the latter for the sins of the people. (Lev. xvi.) By these repeated acts of expiation the Jewish people were cleansed from their repeated sins and defilements, saved from temporal death, and allowed to commune with Almighty GOD in the service of the sanctuary. But the law was only a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things. (Heb. x. 1.) What the Jewish priests and sacrifices did through types, CHRIST, the true Priest and true Sacrifice, did for us in reality.

Once for all He entered into the tabernacle of our flesh, that He might suffer and die for us; and He went up once into heaven, the true holy place,³ that He might offer up His own Blood as an atonement, by which He saved us, not from temporal, but from eternal, death, and procured for us the privilege not only of communing with GOD in an earthly sanctuary, but of dwelling with Him in a

¹ Fourth Sunday in Lent.

² Epistle, verses 12, 13;

³ verses 11, 12.

house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. But from the latter part of this portion of Holy Scripture, we learn that He has thus purified us unto Himself, in order that we may be unto Him a peculiar people, zealous of good works;¹ through His Blood we are indeed purged from dead works, and through His death we are called to heavenly inheritance; but having been so called, we must renounce those dead works, and serve the living GOD, if we would also receive the promise.

This is the great atonement which the Church on this day begins to commemorate. To-day we remember the first council (St. John, xi. 46, 47) which was held against our Blessed LORD, preparatory to His crucifixion; the Gospel therefore presents Him to us as beginning to endure the contradiction of sinners against Himself.² He Who will have all men to come to the knowledge of truth, is here endeavouring to convince obstinate sinners of the truth of His divinity, that so they might believe and be saved; but they will not hear His words: they revile and reject Him, and take up stones to cast at Him.³ Our LORD then leaves them, and hides himself from them; and so does He deal with all those who reject the truth when it is made known to them. Though He may bear long with them, yet in the end He will hide Himself from them, and give them up to their impenitence and hardness of heart. By their unbelief they crucify the Son of GOD afresh, and so deprive themselves of the benefits of His Passion. What should have been for their salvation becomes to them an offence and an occasion of falling.

It is to warn us against a like danger that the

¹ Epistle, verse 14, and Titus, ii. 14.

² Gospel, verse 45, &c. ;

³ verse 59.

Church prepares us for celebrating our Blessed LORD's Passion, by bringing before us the doctrine of His divinity. Let us, then, profit by her guidance. Let us ever, and especially at this holy season, approach the awful subject of our LORD's Passion with a full belief in His Blessed Godhead. While we behold Him, a Man of Sorrows, despised and rejected of men, let us bear in mind that He Who suffered is both God and Man, the great "I AM,"¹ Who was, and is, and is to come; so only shall we be prepared to enter into His mysterious sufferings, and to receive the full benefit of His atoning sacrifice. The redemption of the world from the tyranny of the devil and bondage of sin, is typified to us by the redemption of Israel from the tyranny of Pharaoh and the bondage of Egypt. To this subject the Church from this day turns our thoughts. We read how GOD looked upon the affliction of His people;² how the same great Being, Whom the Gospel speaks of under the title of "I AM," heard their cries; and, remembering His covenant with their forefathers,³ determined that the good time was come when He should rid them of their bondage.⁴ So GOD dealt with us. "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." (Is. lix. 1.)

Out of the heavens did the LORD behold the earth, that He might hear the mournings of such as are in captivity, and deliver the children appointed unto death. (Ps. cii. 19, 20.) He sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that through His death He might destroy him that had the

¹ Gospel, verse 58; also Morning Lesson, verse 14;

² verse 7.

³ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 8.

⁴ verse 6.

power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Heb. ii. 14, 15.) Such, then, is the mighty Prophet and Deliverer, of Whom Moses was only the type, (Deut. xviii. 15,) and such the mighty deliverance which He as at this time effected for us. He is the Redeemer Who humbled Himself to the death on the Cross for us sinners who lay in darkness and in the shadow of death, that He might exalt us to everlasting life; we are now the "holy nation, the peculiar people," who have been appointed to show forth the praises of Him Who has thus called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

To Him, therefore, we must look for mercy, for pardon, and for peace; not murmuring against Him, like the rebellious Israelites,¹ but praying in the words of the Collect, that He Who once so mercifully looked upon His people, will continue to "look mercifully" upon us, that by His great goodness we may be "governed and preserved evermore both in body and soul."²



The Holy Week.

WE now enter upon the "Holy Week" of our LORD'S passion. No words of men are strong enough to express the reverential awe with which Christians should draw near to celebrate the Holy Passion-tide. GOD MADE FLESH suffers for the sins of man, and man, for whom He suffered, is contemplating His suffer-

¹ Evening Lesson, verses 20, 21.

² Collect.

ings. GOD's own word, therefore, is our best guide in approaching so great and awful a subject; to it, therefore, does the Church lead us.

Four times during this sacred season is the solemn narrative of our LORD's Passion read to us out of Holy Scripture; each evangelist in turn being brought forward to tell (as far as it is GOD's will that we should know) of all that our adorable Redeemer did and said and suffered, from His entry into Jerusalem until His death upon the Cross. But the Church does not leave us here; from contemplating His sufferings, she would make us to be "conformed" to them; and from meditating upon His Cross, she would lead us to bear it after Him.

Opportunities of attending the services of the Church are in these days afforded us in most parishes; not a day should pass without finding us in our places, ready to listen to the history of our Saviour's love, prepared on our knees to search out in our hearts those sins which made necessary that awful sacrifice, and at the foot of the Cross to cast them forth and make room for the love of Him Who hath so loved us.

It is necessary here to remark that until Thursday no reference is made to the second Lessons of the day, which are so wisely appointed in our new lectionary. These chapters consist of the discourses of our LORD to His apostles in the upper chamber, and should be made the subjects of separate meditation, most suggestive as they are, of thankful thoughts and heartfelt prayer.



Sixth Sunday in Lent.

OR THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE EASTER, COMMONLY CALLED PALM SUNDAY.¹

Epistle, Philippians, ii. 5. *Morning Lessons*, Exodus, ix.;
St. Matthew, xxvi.
Gospel, St. Matthew, xxvii. *Evening Lessons*, Exodus, x.
1. or xi.; St. Luke, xix., verse
28 or xx. 9-21.

 HIS is the day of our LORD's solemn entry into Jerusalem. He had hurried up to His royal city, going *before* His disciples in His eagerness to do His Father's will and die for His children by His children's hands. At Bethany He paused, and there with the risen Lazarus and his beloved sisters He stays to refresh His own weakened frame by a day's quiet social intercourse. As He opened His public life, so now He closes it, by giving His sanction to those harmless festivities which, when unsullied by worldly excesses, are blessed by GOD, to the refreshment of the mind and body of man. But He does not long permit Himself to rest; even at the feast He is ready to remind His followers that He is going to His death, and the gift of the woman, like the offerings of the Magi, is but the type and witness (ignorantly borne) of the burial, which should complete the sacrifice and precede the glorious Resurrection. In the morning He prepares to enter as a king, and in accordance with prophecy,² the city of His father David, the

¹ From the branches of palm strown before our LORD, on the occasion of His solemn entry into Jerusalem.

² Zechariah, ix. 9.

type of the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of His Father, God. The Pharisees grumble that He should accept the homage of the multitude, who, carried away with enthusiasm, conduct Him to the Holy city, singing rightly in His honour the Psalm of David to the Messiah.

Knowing all that should befall Him there, He voluntarily enters the city which is to be the scene of His sufferings. He voluntarily gives Himself up to the fickle multitude, knowing that, though to-day they call Him "king," to-morrow they will call Him "malefactor;" though to-day their cry is "hosanna!" to-morrow it will be "crucify!"

By this voluntary giving up of Himself, He proves Himself to be our Priest as well as our Sacrifice,—our full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction. In this character, therefore, to-day we consider Him.

From St. Matthew's account of His Blessed Passion, read to us in the second Morning Lesson and in the Gospel for the day, we learn how CHRIST, as our Passover, was sacrificed for us. As our sin-offering, we behold Him in the garden,¹ "bearing all our iniquities," (Leviticus, xvi. 22,) and enduring, in His pure and sinless soul, the agony which was due to our transgressions; and when we follow Him to Calvary, we see in Him the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, that "very paschal Lamb" which was offered up to take away our sins.

To impress these solemn truths upon our minds, the captivity of the children of Israel is again brought before us in the first Lessons for the day.² The many disappointments and impediments which attended their rescue, are intended to show what

¹ Second Morning Lesson, verse 37, &c.

² Exodus, ix., x., and xi.

a strong hold sin has over those who are in its bonds, and therefore how great is the deliverance which our LORD, as at this time, wrought for us. Ten plagues were required to draw out the Israelites from among the idolatrous people; so does GOD send trial after trial, and warning after warning, to force us from the bonds of sin, and oftentimes inflicts grievous calamities before sinners can be drawn away from the captivity of their own wicked passions. Another awful thought is also conveyed to us in these Lessons, which is profitable for our meditation at this time. From it we learn the danger of being brought near to the wonders of GOD's redemption without having a heart to profit by them. The same mighty works which were the salvation of the Israelites, were to Pharaoh the occasion of destruction. To the one the savour of life unto life, to the other of death unto death. By his insensibility in the midst of warning, Pharaoh grieved GOD's Holy Spirit, provoked the LORD to withdraw It from him, and so fell into that fearful state which Holy Scripture expresses by saying that "GOD hardened his heart."¹

And shall we not fall into the same guilt if we listen to the wondrous account of CHRIST's suffering and passion, as if we had no part in the redemption which they purchased? May we not fear that if we are thus wilfully careless and insensible to the wonders of His love now displayed to us, our hearts may be hardened before another commemoration of them comes round? And this brings us to another lesson which is to be drawn from the services now before us, as taught us in the Collect and Epistle for the day. Here we learn that if we would have Him for our priest

¹ Second Morning Lesson, verse 35; first Evening Lesson, verse 20.

and our sacrifice we must take Him for our example also. He was indeed given through GOD's "tender love"¹ for the salvation of mankind, but it was in order that mankind should follow the example of His patience and humility. Our sins must be nailed to His Cross, and His holiness transplanted into our lives, if we would truly benefit by His blessed Passion. Pride must be cast out in contemplating Him Who "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant;"² covetousness must be rooted out of the members of Him, Who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor; neither can selfishness be suffered to reign in the disciples of Him Who endured pain, reproach, shame, and even death itself, for us and for our salvation. Whatsoever be our besetting sin, it must be mortified and crucified, until "this mind be in us, which was also in CHRIST JESUS."³

These are the thoughts with which we are to enter upon the duties of this holy week. Striving to realize that it was our sins which caused Him to suffer, we must resolve and pray that we may not add one thorn more to the crown which pierced His sacred head, or one pang more to the sufferings which agonized His sacred body.

So may we humbly hope that the purposes of GOD's tender love towards us may be realized; that being thus taken as our example, He may be also our Sacrifice and our High Priest; that being thus crucified in us, He may also be crucified for us, and lead us, "by His Cross and Passion, unto the glory of His Resurrection."⁴

¹ Collect.

³ verse 5.

² Epistle, verse 7;

⁴ Collect for the Annunciation.

Monday before Easter.

For the Epistle, Isaiah, lxiii. Morning Lessons, Lamentations, i. 1-15; St. John, xiv.

Gospel, St. Mark, xiv. 1. Evening Lessons, Lamentations, ii. 13; St. John, xiv. 15.

 HE general outline of our LORD's doings during the first three days of this week is given by St. Luke. (xxi. 37.) "In the day time He was teaching in the Temple, and at night He went out and abode in the Mount of Olives;" there, in the garden, whither Judas knew that He was wont to resort, He sought that peace and quiet, for meditation and prayer, which was denied Him in the turmoil of the city. A picture this, which speaks to the busy ones—the Marthas—of life. Even the Saviour's human soul needed the quiet time of repose and communion with GOD. The hurried prayer, the brief moment unwillingly snatched from engrossing business, cannot satisfy the hungry soul.

Retirement, spiritual rest, quiet meditation with the Father in the Gethsemane of the secret chamber; these, if needful to the LORD, are surely indispensable to the disciple. But the LORD JESUS, refreshed by these evenings of solitude, was very earnest in "His Father's business" during the day; diligent in preparing men's minds for the coming sacrifice.

The Gospel of the day, in the concise style of St. Mark, leads us rapidly through the first scenes of our LORD's passion. His last act of love in

bequeathing the Sacrament of His Body and Blood¹ through the Apostles and their successors to the Church; the Agony of the whole world's sin with the horror of death, in the Garden of Gethsemane;² the betrayal of one Apostle,³ the denial of another,⁴ the desertion of all.⁵ Truly, when we consider His power as GOD to have called legions of willing angels to His help, and the annihilation of His foes; when we think of His mighty love for those who were deserting Him or compassing His death, His own people, whose city *was* the joy of the whole earth, but should shortly be turned into an object of hissing in vengeance for its refusal of Him;⁶ we cannot but see in all this, the literal fulfilment of words spoken years before by Him through the mouth of His prophet, "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me."⁷ But while we marvel at His mercy, His longsuffering, and His love, let us not be slow to follow His example of holy life, and learn from that kneeling, agonized figure, in the shades of Gethsemane, the lessons of watchfulness and prayer. Watch with Him against the temptations of Satan, whether to despair in sorrow, or to blasphemy in prosperity. Pray, with earnestness such as His, that we may be able to gain the victory over our spiritual foes. Looking beyond the time of His human agony, to the period of His Divine triumph, we see in Him the mighty Deliverer returning from the slaughter of our enemies at the price of His own Blood;⁸ for by His death He overcame death for us, and vanquished for us

¹ Gospel, verses 22-24;² verse 43;³ verses 66-72;⁴ verses 32-42.⁵ verse 50.⁶ First Evening Lesson, verse 15.⁷ First Morning Lesson, verse 12.⁸ Epistle, verse 1.

the powers of darkness. We know also that He is the gracious Husbandman Who for our sakes has trodden the wine-press alone;¹ for by the labours and sufferings which He endured in our stead, He exhausted and "pressed down" the measure of His Father's wrath against us. In Him, also, we see the gracious Saviour Who has redeemed us from bondage by the strength of His right hand; for He has delivered us from this present evil world to lead us through the wilderness into our land of rest.² But with the love and gratitude with which we remember our redemption, we must ever mingle the deepest humiliation, self-abasement, and prayer. At this time, especially, when we are contemplating Him as stained with His own Blood for our sakes, we must turn to Him with the deepest penitence and contrition. In the words of the prophet, we must acknowledge that we have "erred from His ways, and hardened our hearts from His fear."³ Reminding Him that we are His people, called by His name, we must profit by this season to implore that He would look graciously down from heaven, "and not restrain" the "bowels of His mercies" towards us.⁴

¹ Epistle, verse 3;³ verse 17;² verse 12, &c.⁴ verse 15.

Tuesday before Easter.

For the Epistle, Isaiah, l. 5. *Morning Lessons*, Lamentations, iii. 1-34; St. John, xv. 1-14.
Gospel, St. Mark, xv. 1. *Evening Lessons*, Lamentations, iii. 34; St. John, xv. 14.

TO-DAY'S Gospel, following out the narrative of our LORD's sufferings as related by St. Mark, anticipates in part the commemoration of Good Friday.

It draws our attention to the trial of our blessed LORD before Pilate, the cruel treatment suffered at the hands of the Gentiles by the instigation of the Jews, and as to-morrow's commemoration will teach us a lesson from the perfidy of Judas, so does to-day bring its warning from the weakness of Pilate. Aware of the unpopularity which he had earned by many acts of injustice and cruelty, and yet convinced of the innocence of JESUS, he tried to find an escape from the dilemma by offering to release Him, according to the custom of setting one prisoner free at the feast; but the chief priests were vehement in demanding the release of the murderer Barabbas, and the death of the innocent JESUS of Nazareth. Pilate, willing to content the people, yielded to their clamour, and delivered up JESUS to death.

While we condemn the sin of Pilate, are we sure that we are not in danger of the same fault? Tempted by the allurements of society, the struggle for popularity, or the enticements of evil company, do we not at times by our words or our examples

take part against Him, Whose we are, and Whom we serve, Who died for *us*? From the hall of judgment the Gospel bids us follow our LORD through the cruel scourging, the bitter mockery and insults of the hardened soldiery. Then, weakened by His night of agony and His morning of sorrow and suffering, laden with His Cross, He is led out to Calvary.

What a blessed task it was for that countryman to be allowed to share with his LORD the burden of the Cross! If we may recognize in the Rufus mentioned by St. Paul,¹ one of his sons, we may well suppose that the scene and perhaps the words of our LORD did their work upon his heart.

We cannot enter entirely into the depth of our Redeemer's sufferings on the Cross; we cannot know the full extent of the agony endured by His pure and spotless soul at the sight and hearing of so much wickedness, when, in addition to the wickedness around Him, He bore within Him the weight and torment of our transgressions. When, therefore, we follow Him through the scene of His trial, condemnation, and death, we can but adore with wonder, and learn the lesson which the portion of Scripture appointed to accompany it would suggest. From Him, then, we learn the duties of patience and resignation. He, Who came to do His Father's will, would drain the cup of misery to the dregs. He was "not rebellious, nor turned away back; He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; He hid not His face from shame and spitting."² He gave His cheek to them that smote Him, and was filled full with reproach,"³ and was

¹ Romans, xvi. 13.

² Epistle, verse 5, &c.

³ First Morning Lesson, verse 30.

content to be a derision to all His people.¹ How does this teach His followers to be patient and forbearing towards those who injure or unjustly accuse them, looking upon every affront, not so much as an offence from their fellow-creatures, as a trial sent by GOD for their spiritual good! Such trials are common in a greater or less degree to all Christians in their daily course, so that there is no member of CHRIST who may not in this respect have the privilege of humbly following in the footsteps of his LORD.

Again, in the hour of darkness and agony such as no mortal frame ever knew, we find that our Blessed Saviour trusted in the LORD His GOD, and was not confounded.² Hence do Christians derive encouragement and comfort in their hours of darkness and distress; they learn that "if they compass them about with the sparks which they have kindled"³—that is, if they trust for comfort to themselves, or their fellow-creatures—they shall but lie down in sorrow; but if the members of CHRIST remember that "the LORD is good unto them that *wait* for Him and to the soul that seeketh Him,"⁴ if they will call upon the name of the LORD,⁵ then they shall not be confounded; they "shall not be afraid of any evil tidings, for their heart standeth fast, and believeth in the LORD." (Ps. cxii. 7.)

Thus has our Blessed Redeemer "left to all of us an example that we should follow His steps." To teach us the duty of forbearance, He "reviled not again" when He was "reviled" (1 St. Peter, ii. 23); and to train us into perfect submission to

¹ First Morning Lesson, verse 14. ² Epistle, verse 10;

³ verse 11.

⁴ First Morning Lesson, verse 25.

⁵ First Evening Lesson, verse 55.

the will of GOD, He cheerfully committed Himself unto Him that judgeth righteously. Well, therefore, may we pray in the Collect for this week, that the contemplation of this His great example, may make us so imitate His patience and humility here, as to become sharers of His glory hereafter.



Wednesday before Easter.

Epistle, Hebrews, ix. 16.

Morning Lessons, Lamentations, iv. 1-21; St. John, xvi. 1-16.

Gospel, St. Luke, xxii. 1.

Evening Lessons, Daniel, ix. 20; St. John, xvi. 16.

THIS is the day on which we commemorate the betrayal of our Blessed LORD. The Pharisees knew that the warnings and rebukes contained in the parables spoken by JESUS at this time were addressed to them, and feeling conscience-stricken, they were enraged.¹ The Sadducees were incensed at His open declaration of the truth of the Resurrection.² But the common people heard Him gladly,³ so that any open apprehension of Him might have caused an uproar.⁴ The chief priests, therefore, took counsel "how they might take JESUS *by subtilty* and kill Him."⁵ The devil was ready with the instrument whereby they might carry their evil wishes into effect.

"Then entered Satan into Judas Iscariot,"⁶ and

¹ St. Luke, xx. 19.

² St. Matthew, xxii. 23.

³ St. Mark, xii. 37.

⁴ Gospel, verse 6, and St. Mark, xiv. 2.

⁵ St. Matthew, xxvi. 5.

⁶ Gospel, verse 3.

a second time¹ found in him a willing servant. Tempted either by the lust of gain or the ambition which might be satisfied by compelling his Master to claim His temporal kingdom; for thirty pieces of silver Judas sold his LORD and his GOD.² His heart was hardened, and his eyes blinded, he knew not perhaps the extent of his crime, but that he was sinning he was well aware. Our LORD had indeed come to do His Father's will, and die not for Himself but for us; but woe to that man by whom He was betrayed. The Messiah must indeed be cut off when the 70 weeks (490 years = 70 weeks of years) from the rebuilding of the Temple were accomplished according to prophecy, and the thirty-two years of His earthly life completed.³ The necessity to us of this awful sacrifice is illustrated by the writer of the Epistle by a reference to earthly laws and legal sacrifices. The laws held by the Jews with respect to a covenant or testament⁴ (for the word is used in both senses) are those which he takes to illustrate this great doctrine. To obtain an inheritance, or benefit by a covenant, certain conditions are required; the death of the testator, or person from whom we inherit, is the necessary condition of our obtaining a promised inheritance; therefore, the death of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who is the dispenser of our promised inheritance, is the necessary condition of our becoming inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. And as with the inheritance, so also with the covenant. The shedding of blood was the condition on which the first covenant depended.⁵

¹ St. John, xii. 6.

² Gospel, verse 5, and St. Matthew, xxvi. 15.

³ First Evening Lesson.

⁴ Epistle, verses 16, 17;

⁵ verse 18.

All things belonging to the Temple were purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there was no remission of sins. Under the second covenant the precious Blood of CHRIST Himself must be shed, before men could be released from their sins, and purified for an inheritance into the heavenly places. The benefits of this second covenant were applied by our LORD to His Church, when, as we read in the Gospel for this day, He substituted, in the place of the Jewish ordinance of the passover, that most blessed Sacrament and Sacrifice of His most blessed Body and Blood, by which our sins are pardoned and our souls purified.¹

It was then indeed necessary for us, and according to the foreknowledge of GOD, that JESUS CHRIST was betrayed and crucified, "that the Blood of the Just was shed in the midst of Jerusalem."²

None the less are we horrified at the blind infatuation of the Jews and the blasphemous treachery of Judas. They had blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, and so by their own course of conduct they "knew not what they did." It must indeed have been not the least bitter drop in that most bitter cup of our LORD's sufferings, to know beforehand the treachery of His own familiar friend, the apostle of His choice. How many warnings did He vouchsafe to him!³ The rebuke of his covetousness at the feast of Bethany. The parable of the two sons spoken in Judas' hearing; the many declarations of His own coming death, and even the very manner of it, "The Son of man must be betrayed." The distinct words at the

¹ Gospel, verse 19, &c.

² First Morning Lesson, verse 13. ³ Gospel, verse 48.

supper-table, "Behold the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table." The kind words before, and even after, the fatal kiss of betrayal, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" All were blindly cast aside that he might run headlong to his destruction, along the broad easy path of ambition and self-pleasing.

This blindness, this hardness did not grow all at once; Judas had been an innocent child, Judas had been a zealous Apostle, but he died a suicide, and "went to his own place" as the betrayer to death of his Master, his GOD. From little beginnings of sin unresisted, he grew into the hated traitor, and murderer, and suicide. But while we shudder at Judas' crime, let us remember that our sins were no less the cause of our LORD'S death than the traitor Judas. By the little germs of sin unresisted, as well as by the greater sins, which shock even the careless world, we share the traitor's guilt, and incur the traitor's danger.

Let us remember that, by yielding to temptation, our eyes become blinded to the nature of sin, and our hearts hardened to its commission, but that such blindness and hardness of heart producing sins, perhaps of ignorance, must be laid, in part at least, to our charge.

"From all blindness and hardness of heart, good LORD deliver us." "Grant that we may never betray Thee by our sins, but remain stedfast in the fellowship of Thy Word and Spirit."



Thursday before Easter.

Epistle, 1 Corinthians, xi. *Morning Lessons*, Hosea, xiii.
 17. 1-15; St. John, xvii.
Gospel, St. Luke, xxiii. 1. *Evening Lessons*, Hosea, xiv.;
 St. John, xiii. 1-36.

 HE new covenant in CHRIST'S Blood of which yesterday's Epistle spoke, was on this day's evening instituted and ordained. It was on this solemn night that our Blessed LORD and Master left with His Church those pledges of His love which apply to the faithful receiver the benefits of His most precious Body and Blood.

In remembrance of this new covenant, and also of the "new commandment" of brotherly love which accompanied it, the Church calls this day "Maundy Thursday," or the "Thursday of the Commandment," and selects the subject of the Last Supper for our devout contemplation. In the Second Lesson for this evening, the whole account of the holy Supper is laid before us by the beloved Apostle St. John. Here we are allowed to gaze upon the sacred scene, and to see our Blessed Redeemer for the last time sitting with His apostles.¹ Then we behold the LORD of Glory, Him Who was "one with GOD," "equal with the Father," taking upon Him the form of a servant, and submitting to wash the feet even of those who were most unworthy;² and we learn how in this He hath left us an example, "that we should do as He hath done unto us."³ By condescending to this act of humility and charity before

¹ Second Evening Lesson;

² verse 5;

³ verse 15.

distributing the sacred elements, He has taught the children of the new covenant that they must be kind one to another, tender hearted, loving one another as He hath loved them; and that, especially in coming to the Holy Communion, their fervent charity one towards another must be a necessary condition of their acceptance with GOD. The Epistle selected for this day further shows us the qualifications necessary for partaking worthily of this holy Sacrament of the LORD'S Supper. In it St. Paul alludes to some gross abuses which had crept into the Corinthian Church at the celebration of this sacred ordinance.¹ With these we have nothing to do. The regulations of our holy Church are such that no profaneness of this kind can be committed amongst us. But we are not, therefore, without danger. Still do we need the Apostle's warning to examine ourselves before we presume to "eat of that bread and drink of that cup;"² for if we come lightly or carelessly, without true repentance, or a due sense of the awful nature of these holy mysteries, we are in danger of falling into the sin which the Apostle denounces, and of incurring the punishment he threatens.³ No Christian need, however, on this account abstain from so great a privilege. Our LORD came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He invites to His holy Supper the "poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind," and those that come to Him He will in no wise cast out. If, therefore, we draw near with an humble sense of GOD'S goodness, and of our own unworthiness, with firm resolutions against sin, and earnest desires of amendment, together with a hearty faith in the merits and death of our Saviour JESUS CHRIST,

¹ Epistle, verse 21 ;² verse 28 ;³ verse 27.

we need not doubt but that His Body and Blood will be by us "verily and indeed received." Of this great gift to His Church our LORD had before spoken: "Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (St. John vi. 54.) It was a hard saying, and on account of it many of His disciples forsook Him. The Apostles and more earnest followers of the LORD had acknowledged the mystery, but accepted the saying. Now, all was made clear, spiritual life here, and, through that, eternal life hereafter, was promised to the right reception of this Sacrament of the Gospel.

By such promises did our LORD fulfil what was prophetically spoken of Him by Hosea, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."¹ But, just as the prophet urged repentance on sinning Israel, before they could expect the promised mercies of GOD, so would the Church urge her members to approach this Life-giving Sacrament with words of repentance and contrition. We too are "to take with us words"—those words given us in our grand and simple Liturgy—and pray God, ere we approach Him so nearly, "that He would take away all our iniquity and receive us graciously."² Many will cavil at this act of Christ-given Christian worship, and doubt its efficacy, because they cannot understand its working; but "whoso is wise," in heavenly wisdom, "will understand these things" as the dictates of a Providence wiser than himself; and "whoso is prudent will know," and make use of, these means,

¹ First Morning Lesson, verse 14.

² First Evening Lesson, verse 2.

provided by a loving Father Who would never deceive the children of His desire, sure that "the ways of the LORD are right,"¹ even though they pass man's understanding.

But let us not forget that the ways of the LORD, however clearly pointed out, are full of danger to the careless; "the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein."¹ We have indeed cause to fear lest we should make a careless or a wrong use of that which GOD has given us for our comfort and eternal life, yet, while we tremble, we find joy and consolation in the remembrance that He, Who while on earth prayed so earnestly for His disciples that they might be kept from evil,² still lives to make intercession for us at the throne of Grace.

In His strength then; trusting in His intercessions; with a sense of our own unworthiness and sin, but of His power to forgive and to save; we may approach this Holy Sacrament, the last gift of our SAVIOUR's love before He went to suffering, shame, and death for us.

May we never be tempted to despise so high a privilege or neglect so distinct a duty, that so being made one with our SAVIOUR in this world, we may be known and acknowledged as His in the world to come; by His infinite mercy.

¹ First Evening Lesson, verse 9.

² Second Evening Lesson, verse 15.



Good Friday.

Epistle, Hebrews, x. 1. *Morning Lessons*, Genesis, xxii. 1-20 ; St. John, xviii.
Gospel, St. John, xix. 1. *Evening Lessons*, Isaiah, lii. 13, and liii. ; 1 St. Peter, ii.
Proper Psalms, *Morning*, xxii., xl., liv.
Evening Psalms, lxix., lxxxviii.



GOOD FRIDAY brings us to the last solemn scene of our LORD's sufferings. That most awful event for which we have been preparing is on this day accomplished, and the blessed Lamb of GOD, the true Passover, is slain to take away the sins of the world.

But before we contemplate our Redeemer's Cross, we have to follow Him through the course of His most painful sufferings. As we last night left Him applying to His faithful followers the benefits of His most precious death, so now we behold Him going out to purchase them. First, we must listen to His gracious prayer in which He entreats the Father for us, that we might have eternal life, and be with Him where He is ; (see St. John, xvii. ;) and we must watch Him through His agony in the garden, when, from the weight of our sins, "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Then, taking up the words of the beloved Apostle St. John, who, as an eye-witness of the scene, is selected for our evangelist this day, we read how His sacred Body was seized, tormented, and scourged, Himself abused, insulted, and condemned ; and we follow Him up the hill of Calvary, resolving in heart and mind to take up our

cross and bear it after Him.¹ About the sixth hour of the day, or twelve o'clock, we remember how He nailed the sins of the whole world with His Body to the Cross, and at three o'clock, or the ninth hour, we behold Him finally overcoming the sharpness of death, and so opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Here, then, we must pause, and seek in the services for this day how to make these meditations profitable to ourselves. The Epistle would make us feel the full value of CHRIST'S precious Blood-shedding. By comparing the sacrifices of the Jewish law with that one great and perfect Sacrifice which we are now commemorating, the Apostle shows us the infinite blessedness of living under a dispensation where the shadow has given way to the substance, the type to the reality. Day by day, and year by year,² the priests under the law offered sacrifices, and yet these sacrifices could not in themselves take away sins. They were accepted as prefiguring the blessed Sacrifice of the death of CHRIST, but they did not "make perfect"³ those who offered them. The sacrifice of one day could not atone for the sins of the next, nor the propitiation made for one year blot out the offences of that which was to come. But with the offering of the Body of JESUS CHRIST⁴ it was not so. This was the offering which was to perfect once for all and for ever them which are sanctified.⁵

JESUS CHRIST, our LORD and Saviour, is the great High Priest, Who, being Himself holy, harmless, and undefiled, "needeth not to offer

¹ Gospel and Second Morning Lesson.

² Epistle, verses 1-11;

⁴ verse 10;

⁵ verse 14.

³ verse 1;

first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people." (Heb. ix. 7; see Lev. xvi. 11.) He is Himself the perfect sin-offering Who bare our sins in His own Body, on Whom the iniquities of us all were laid, and Whose Blood was, as on this day, offered up on the altar of the Cross, to make an atonement for our souls. (See Lev. xvii. 11.) We have therefore no more need of sacrifices and offerings for sins. If only we draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our bodies washed with the water of regeneration, and our consciences purified by repentance, we, who were strangers and foreigners, are brought near to GOD in CHRIST JESUS, our sins and iniquities are remembered no more, and we have power to enter into the holiest by His Blood.¹ Such being, then, the benefits which we obtain by the death of CHRIST, well may we on this day mingle thankfulness and love with sorrow and humiliation, and well does the name of Good Friday apply to the day when the "good things"² prefigured by the law were accomplished, and a way³ of salvation opened unto all!

But it is not in the law of Moses alone that the Passion of our LORD JESUS CHRIST is prefigured. The patriarchs, the prophets, and the psalmist, all speak to us by type and prophecy of the things concerning His death. Does not Abraham's voluntary surrender of Isaac, his only son,⁴ remind us of the love of Him Who "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all"? (Rom. viii. 32.) And in the meek submissive Isaac do we not see a faint image of Him Who laid down His life for us, saying, "Father, not My will, but Thine,

¹ Epistle, verse 19;² verse 1;³ verse 20.⁴ First Morning Lesson.

be done"? The Psalms of David, especially those selected for this day, clearly foretell the sufferings and death of the Messiah. The 22nd Psalm describes the sufferings of His Spirit in the time of His spiritual desertion, when, in the agony of His soul He cried, "My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Then it goes on to foretell the cruel mockings and scourgings of His insulting enemies,¹ and lastly, the Psalmist would remind us for whom it was that our Saviour underwent such cruel torments. He tells us that it was for us, "His chosen seed,"² and that we might serve Him unto all generations, that the Son of Man was thus given up.

The 40th Psalm appears to have been written by David on his deliverance from some great danger, but it is clear from the sixth verse that it is CHRIST Himself Who is speaking through his words. He declares His perfect willingness to undertake the work of atonement for us, and do away with the legal sacrifices of the Mosaic covenant.³ He prays for His own and His people's salvation, rejoices in the confusion of the enemies of the Cross,⁴ and in the exaltation of its faithful servants.⁵

The application of the 54th Psalm is plain and easy. David, on the point of being betrayed to his enemies, and yet praying to GOD in full trust and confidence, is a lively image of CHRIST, and of those of His members who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

The 69th Psalm, though written by David when he thought to have perished by the hand of Saul,

¹ Psalm xxii. 16, &c. ;

² verse 31.

³ Psalm xl. 8, &c. ;

⁴ verse 15 ;

⁵ verse 16.

has been so applied by our LORD¹ and His Apostles in the New Testament, as to leave no doubt that it describes the sufferings of the Son of GOD in the day of His Passion.

The tone of sorrow which pervades the whole of the 88th Psalm is well suited to the solemn thoughts of this day, and is particularly applicable as describing the unexampled sufferings of the Son of GOD,² His death and burial,³ together with His fervent prayers for the accomplishment of the salvation of the Church through Him.

But when we come to the prophecies of Isaiah,⁴ the scene of our Saviour's Passion becomes more vivid, and is described with the minuteness of an eye-witness. May we, then, on this day have grace to look back to this sacred scene with the same faith with which the prophet looked forward to it. May we meditate upon it until with him we behold the "Man of Sorrows"⁵ bearing our griefs, and carrying our burdens, pouring out His Soul unto death, and bearing the sins of many, that He might make intercession for the transgressors.⁶

Still, however, it will be to little purpose that we thus meditate upon the Cross of CHRIST unless we are willing to deny ourselves, take up our Cross, and bear it after Him, following His steps; for "even hereunto," says St. Peter in the Second Evening Lesson, "were we called."⁷ It is by the way of His Cross that JESUS CHRIST leads us to heaven. He laid it upon us at our baptism, and as it increases in weight He increases

¹ Psalm lxxix. 21 (compare St. Matthew, xxvii. 34, 48).

² Psalm lxxxviii. 2, &c. ; ³ verses 2, 10, 11, 12.

⁴ First Evening Lesson ; ⁵ verse 3, &c. ;

⁶ verse 12. ⁷ Second Evening Lesson, verse 21.

our strength to bear it. From infancy to old age there is no member of CHRIST who may not in some way bear the burden of His Cross. Each time that we deny ourselves, or suffer patiently for CHRIST's sake, it is CHRIST Who is teaching us to "follow His steps," and leading us back to the "Shepherd and Bishop of our souls."¹

But we must not be content with applying the benefits of the Cross of CHRIST to ourselves alone, we must strive by intercessory prayer to make them profitable unto others also. CHRIST died to reconcile all in one Body to the Cross; and we, who are the "Body of CHRIST, and members in particular," (1 Cor. xii. 27,) must pray for our fellow members as well as for ourselves. First, we pray for the congregation with whom we are this day assembled.² As children of the same family, we come before Him, and jointly plead the merits of His death and sufferings. Then we extend our prayers to all our fellow members in CHRIST's Church,³ who, like us, have been baptized into His death, and are fighting under His Cross. For them we pray that each in his particular station may walk worthy of the vocation to which he is called, truly and godly serving the LORD. Lastly, we intercede for all those who have not yet been grafted into the Body of CHRIST.⁴ We pray that they may "look unto Him from the ends of the earth, and be saved;" that they may with us be made worthy members of that Church which He, as on this day, purchased with His own Blood.

It is by thus contemplating the Cross of CHRIST that Christians may best hope to secure to them-

¹ Second Evening Lesson, verse 25.

² Second Collect.

³ First Collect.

⁴ Third Collect.

selves and others the benefits of His blessed Passion. He became, on this day, the propitiation, not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 St. John, ii. 2.) He was lifted up that He might draw all men unto Him, (St. John, xii. 32,) and give life to all, but if we would be drawn up unto Him, and obtain this life which He has promised, we must "come to Him," as He has commanded. (See St. John, v. 40.)



Easter Eve.

Epistle, 1 St. Peter, iii. 17. *Morning Lessons*, Zechariah, ix.; St. Luke, xxiii. 50.
Gospel, St. Matthew, xxvii. *Evening Lessons*, Hosea, v. 8 to vi. 4; Romans, vi. 1-14.
 57.



OUR thoughts on this day follow our Blessed Redeemer into His silent tomb, for it was during the whole of this day that His sacred Body lay in the grave. Of the facts connected with our LORD's burial, St. Matthew and St. Luke give us the full account; the latter in the Second Morning Lesson, the former in the Gospel for the day. They tell us how towards the evening of the Friday (the day of His crucifixion) our LORD's body was taken down from the Cross; how Joseph of Arimathea, a rich counsellor, fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, that "He should make His grave with the rich;" (Isaiah, liii. 9;) and lastly, we read how the holy women sat in silent contemplation, watching the tomb where their Redeemer lay.¹

With them, therefore; let us watch this day,

¹ Gospel, verse 61.

meditating, as far as Holy Scripture will allow us, on that unseen state into which He has passed before us, and through which He will safely bring all who sleep in Him.

The death and burial of our LORD JESUS CHRIST is an article of our Creed, which is intended for our practical teaching here, as well as for our hope hereafter. In this manner, therefore, the Church now considers it. Out of the very few passages in which Holy Scripture speaks of our LORD's mysterious intermediate state, two are selected as most fitted for our instruction this day. The first is contained in that portion of the prophecies of Zechariah which is read to us as the First Lesson for the morning. In this chapter the prophet is describing the victories of CHRIST over the enemies of His people.¹ Of these enemies, death was the last which was to be destroyed; and death itself was overcome, when, as on this day, our Saviour descended into the pit of the grave; for when, as at this time, His soul entered the place of departed spirits, He brought the hope of release both to those whom the grave had already made "its prisoners,"² as well as to such as "through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. ii. 15.)

The same thought is conveyed to us in that verse of St. Peter's Epistle in which it is said that "He went and preached unto the spirits in prison."³ This expression "in prison" refers to Hades, or the intermediate state, and might otherwise be rendered "in safe keeping;" therefore, from both these passages, we are to understand, that while the Body of our Divine Redeemer lay in the grave,

¹ First Morning Lesson, verses 1-11;

² verses 11, 12.

³ Epistle, verse 19.

His soul held communion with that blessed company who are "resting yet a little while, until the number of their fellow-servants and of their brethren shall be fulfilled." (See Rev. vi. 11.) Thus did our LORD sanctify the grave, and prepare a place of rest and blessedness for those who sleep in Him.

Of this place and state of peace Hosea also speaks in the First Evening Lesson. Having sternly rebuked Ephraim for the idolatries of her people, especially in having obeyed "the commandment"¹ of Jeroboam, and resorted to Bethel for the worship of the golden calves, he looks forward to a time, when the calamities which GOD would send as a punishment, should by His grace work repentance in them, and they should turn and seek the LORD.² He points with the finger of prophecy to the burial and resurrection of CHRIST, and so associates His disciples with their Master, that he speaks of GOD reviving *us*, raising *us* up.³ He would seem to say that for those who will take up their cross and with feet of repentance follow their LORD in the trials and sorrows of the narrow way, there is surely rest in the grave; with CHRIST they shall be buried, with Him raised again. "There remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of GOD," a rest which has been purchased for them by the death and burial of the Son of GOD.

What the happiness of that state is we cannot tell; it is enough for us to know, that to depart into it is to be with CHRIST; that there "the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest;" (Job, iii. 17;) and that "those who die in the LORD," there, "*rest* from their labours" and

¹ First Evening Lesson, verse 11;

² verse 15;

³ verse 2.

are blessed. (Rev. xiv. 13.) Those holy souls, with whom we have held communion on earth, are there, waiting for us to fill up the number of GOD'S elect, and accomplish His kingdom.

But whilst we thus meditate on the happiness of that blessed state, let us remember that we who have been baptized into CHRIST must (as the Second Evening Lesson reminds us) be buried with CHRIST in this life, before we can be safely buried with Him in our death. "Being buried with Him," St. Paul says, "by baptism unto death, so should we also walk in newness of life."¹

For this reason, Christian baptism is called a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness, and in that new life of righteousness we must continue if we would be numbered among the "blessed dead" who sleep in the LORD, that they may also rise with Him to eternal day.

Thus does the burial of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST represent unto baptized Christians their profession, which is, to die unto sin and continually to mortify all their corrupt affections.² The lives of CHRIST'S members are to be formed in all things after the pattern of their Divine Head. As His nativity, His circumcision, and His crucifixion, teach us to be born again, to be circumcised and crucified in the spirit, so His burial teaches us to be dead unto sin.³ The remembrance of our Redeemer's sacred Body, stiff and cold, and lying in the tomb, must bury in us all worldly selfish thoughts, making us "take less thought for what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed." The thought of His still, quiet grave must subdue in us

¹ Second Evening Lesson, verse 4 ;

² verses 12, 13, and Collect ;

³ verse 11.

all pride, all evil, uncharitable, irritable tempers, and so fit us for that blessed state of calm and quiet rest to which He is bringing us. Having thus been buried with Him in our life, we may humbly hope to be buried with Him in our death, and, together with those blessed souls who have departed in the true faith and fear of His holy Name, to wait in peace and hope, for the morning of the Resurrection.



Easter Day.

Epistle, Colossians, iii. 1. *Morning Lessons*, Exodus, xii.

1-29; Revelation, i. 10-19.

Gospel, St. John, xx. 1. *Evening Lessons*, Exodus, xii.

29 or xiv.; St. John, xx.

11-19, or Revelation, v.

Proper Psalms, ii., lvii., cxi.

Evening Psalms, cxiii., cxiv., cxviii.



T WAS on this glorious morning that our LORD JESUS CHRIST rose from the dead. To those who had been weeping at His Cross, and watching at His tomb, the dawn of this happy day brought the joyful news of His rising again; and so it is still. To those who have been truly following the sorrows of His Passion does each returning Easter morning still bring the joys of His Resurrection; for, no sooner have we confessed our sins in GOD'S House, and in His Name received absolution, than the Church at once proclaims to us the joyful tidings that "CHRIST our passover is sacrificed for us,"—that CHRIST our first-fruits is risen from the dead.¹

These two expressions make us realize the full extent of the blessings conferred on us by the

¹ Anthem for the day.

Resurrection of CHRIST. When the Jews kept their passover, it was to be a "feast to the LORD throughout their generations."¹ They remembered the wonderful deliverance that had been wrought for them; they hoped for a merciful acceptance of their sacrifice, and rejoiced.

But we who keep the Christian passover keep a still higher feast. Not only do we remember the greatest of all deliverances, and commemorate the greatest of all sacrifices, but we have the assurance, (which they had not,) that our Sacrifice has not only been offered, but also accepted; that He Who was slain for our sins has risen again for our justification.

Again, when the Jews desired that GOD would bless the coming harvest, they offered up their first-fruits to Him, and so brought a blessing upon the remaining crop. (Lev. xxiii. 10, 11.) This action shadowed forth, as in a type, that which was accomplished in the Christian Church on this day. Christians are now the harvest of the Almighty; CHRIST, their Head, is the first-fruits, by the offering up of Whom the whole Christian Church is sanctified and blessed. As, therefore, the springing up of the first-fruits is an earnest or assurance of the springing up of the whole harvest, so likewise the Resurrection of JESUS CHRIST, our Head and first-fruits, is an earnest or assurance of our own resurrection. From it we derive the comfortable assurance that "our souls shall not sleep in death, neither our flesh see corruption," (Psalm xvi. 11,) but that as CHRIST rose from the dead, so shall every man "rise in his own order; CHRIST the first-fruits; afterward they that are CHRIST'S at His coming," (1 Cor. xv. 23.)

¹ First Morning Lesson, verse 14.

No wonder, then, that the day which brings to us such unspeakable blessings should from all ages have been observed with the utmost solemnity. The early Christians called it the queen of all feasts, the greatest of all festivals, the highest of all Sundays; and we, following in their steps, still reckon it to be the highest festival of the whole year. Christmas has indeed been called the "mother of all festivals," because it is the beginning and origin of all; but Easter is the "queen of feasts," because it crowns and completes them all.

To celebrate GOD's praises on this holy day, six Proper Psalms are appointed, in which we thank GOD for the wonders of redemption and salvation. In the second Psalm, David is prophetically speaking of the victory of CHRIST over His enemies. When, therefore, we repeat this Psalm, we celebrate the triumph of our Redeemer over our spiritual enemies, and rejoice that now, by His glorious Resurrection, He has perfected the victory, and is for ever set upon "His holy hill of Sion."¹

The 57th Psalm begins by recalling to our minds the humiliation and death of the Messiah;² but from the 6th verse the tone changes, and we break into such glorious strains as are fitted for the day when our Blessed Redeemer overcame death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life. On this holy morning, then, especially, should Christians "awake up early" to sing and give praise to GOD, to magnify Him above the heavens, and His glory above all the earth.³

In the 111th Psalm we praise GOD for the great and marvellous "work" which He has wrought

¹ Psalm ii. 6.² Psalm lvii. 1-6;³ verse 9, &c.

for us.¹ It was on this day that "He sent redemption unto His people, and commanded His covenant for ever;"² therefore "His work is worthy to be praised and had in honour;" we will, then, "give thanks unto the LORD with our whole heart, secretly among the faithful and in the congregation."³

The 113th Psalm is also a hymn of praise to our great Redeemer. In it we extol the mercy of Him Who, though having His dwelling so high, yet humbled Himself so far as to undertake the work of saving the poor and sinful sons of earth.⁴

The 114th Psalm celebrates the Exodus, or going forth of the children of Israel from Egypt, and their redemption from the tyranny of Pharaoh. Christians use it on this day as typical of a far higher redemption. They praise GOD for having taken them out of the world, as out of a land of strange people, and brought them to serve GOD in His sanctuary and under His dominion.⁵

We conclude the Psalms for this day with a triumphant hymn, which, having been sung by King David, while at the head of his people he led them in solemn procession to the temple, may be considered as sung by CHRIST, the King of GOD's true Israel, on the occasion of His Resurrection and exaltation. He it was, Who, as on this day, became our salvation, that we might not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord;⁶ that we might live in this world a life of grace and in the world to come a life of glory. He opened unto us this day the gates of righteousness that we might go into them, and give thanks unto the

¹ Psalm cxi. 4;

² verse 1.

³ Psalm cxiv. 1, 2.

⁴ verse 9;

⁵ Psalm cxiii. 5, 6, &c.

⁶ Psalm cxviii. 17.

LORD.¹ This, then, "is the day which the LORD hath made ; we will rejoice and be glad in it."²

With our hearts full of these joyful strains, we are prepared to hear the wonderful account of our LORD'S Resurrection, as related to us by St. John in the Gospel,³ and commented upon by St. Peter in this evening's Second Lesson.⁴ The Gospel tells of the trembling doubt and uncertainty with which St. Peter and St. John first visited the holy sepulchre. Mary Magdalene had already discovered that His sacred Body was no longer there,⁵ but in her haste to communicate this fact to the two disciples, she missed the appearance of the angels, (St. Matt. xxviii. 2 ; St. Mark, xvi. 5 ; St. Luke, xxiv. 4,) who in the meantime had proclaimed to the other women the joyful news, "He is not here ; for He is risen, as He said." When, therefore, she and the two Apostles arrived at the empty tomb, it was under the impression that the Body of the LORD had been taken away to be laid they knew not where.⁶ But they who sincerely seek the LORD JESUS are not long suffered to remain in doubt or error. The devoted Mary Magdalene was, as we afterwards find,⁷ the person whom our Saviour honoured with His first interview ; teaching us the acceptableness in His sight of a repentant sinner, one who has *risen* from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. Two Lessons to-day⁸ give us a glimpse of post-Resurrection glory. We see the risen Saviour, no longer clothed in humility, but in majesty ; those Hands that had been pierced for our sakes now holding

¹ Psalm cxviii. 19 ; ² verse 24. ³ St. John, xx.

⁴ Acts, ii. ⁵ Gospel, verse 2 ; ⁶ verses 6, 7.

⁷ Second Evening Lesson, verse 14.

⁸ Second Morning and alt. Second Evening Lesson.

the stars of the Churches redeemed by His Blood ; those wounded Feet, now strong as burnished brass to spurn the faithless or haste to the help of the faithful ; that Countenance, once " marred more than any man's," shining as " the sun in his strength ;"¹ we see Him in the glory which He forsook that He might redeem us, His rebellious subjects.

GOD grant us grace so to live with Him here, that we may at the last day rise with Him and live with Him for ever, Who is " the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending ;"² " the Lamb of GOD that was slain," but is " alive for evermore,"³ to be the glory and joy of those whom He has " redeemed to GOD by His Blood."⁴

Having now been taught why we must so gladly keep this feast, the remainder of the services teach us how to keep it. For this purpose the First Morning Lesson takes us back to the rules relating to the Jewish passover, that from the laws of GOD concerning the celebration of the typical feast we may learn His will with regard to the Christian festival which it foreshadowed. The sacrifice of the passover in all things corresponded with the sacrifice of the death of CHRIST. The lamb slain was to be one without blemish and without spot, chosen from among the flock.⁵ Christ, the Lamb of GOD, was holy, harmless, undefiled, (Heb. vii. 26,) chosen from among His own people to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. The blood of this paschal lamb applied, according to GOD's commandment, upon the doorposts of the respective

¹ Second Morning Lesson, verses 15, 16 ; ² verse 11 ;

³ verse 18, and alt. Second Evening Lesson, verse 12.

⁴ Alt. Second Evening Lesson, verse 9.

⁵ First Morning Lesson, verse 5.

houses, was to be the safeguard of the Israelites when the destroying angel should pass by.¹ The Blood of JESUS CHRIST our very Paschal Lamb, applied to our bodies according to GOD's ordinances, and received into our hearts by faith, shall be our safeguard in the day of GOD's fierce anger ; for, when the destroying angel shall be sent to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, he will "pass over"¹ those who will be found to have the Name of GOD sealed in their foreheads. (See Rev. vii. 3, xxii. 4 ; Ezek. ix. 4.) Again, as the typical sacrifice and feast of the Jewish pass-over was to be kept unto all generations,² in remembrance of the wonderful deliverance wrought by GOD at this time ; so is the commemorative sacrifice and feast of the Holy Eucharist celebrated to keep up, amongst ourselves, the remembrance of the wonderful deliverance wrought for us by our LORD's death, until He shall come again.

And, as in the institution and benefits of this feast, so also in the manner of partaking of it, are the Jewish laws profitable for our learning. To celebrate aright this holy feast, the Jews were commanded to put away leaven out of their houses, and to eat nothing but unleavened bread.³ Now, leaven is an emblem of sin : its property is to stir up and swell that with which it is mixed, so as to change its very nature and quality. So may the very smallest sin, if once wilfully admitted and retained in the heart, rise and increase in us, so as to change the very nature of the regenerate soul. Therefore must Christians, who would celebrate aright their holy passover, put away from their hearts the very smallest leaven of malice and

¹ First Morning Lesson, verse 13 ; ² verse 14 ;

³ verse 20.

wickedness, and resolve to serve GOD in sincerity of living and truth.¹ Again, we read that when the Israelites ate their feast, they were to do so with their loins girded and their staves in their hands;² and so must redeemed Christians, who would truly "keep the feast," stand as "strangers and pilgrims," (1 St. Peter, ii. 11,) ready to go out into the land into which the LORD their GOD is leading them. As the Israelites departed under the direct guidance of GOD after their 430 years' bondage in Egypt;³ so must we Christians, fleeing from the bondage of sin, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, go forth in the wilderness of life, toward the promised land of heaven, having our feet shod for the journey with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. (Eph. vi, 14, 15.)

But we Christians, who have been "redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb," have a still higher lesson to learn, which the passover of the Israelites could not teach us. The death and resurrection of JESUS CHRIST our Head, represent the change which passes upon every one of His members in holy baptism. This is why the feast of CHRIST'S Resurrection was chosen by the early Church as an especial season for administering that holy sacrament, and why the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, by which "GOD figures unto us His holy baptism," (see Baptismal Service,) is chosen as the subject of the alternative First Evening Lesson. The covering or sprinkling of the body with water represents deadness unto sin; it is a sign that they who are baptized into CHRIST'S death have nailed their sins to His Cross, and will

¹ Anthem for the day. (1 Corinthians, v. 8.)

² First Morning Lesson, verse 11, &c.

³ First Evening Lesson, verse 40.

no more serve them ; while the rising again out of the water implies that they are risen again unto righteousness, alive unto GOD through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Just as the Israelites, on stepping out of the Red Sea, left their enemies behind them in its waves, and set forward to walk through the wilderness unto the promised land ; so we, who have risen out of the waters of baptism, leave our spiritual enemies behind in its waves, and set forward to "seek those things which are above," with our "affections set on things above, not on things on earth."¹ It was then that GOD's special grace, preventing, or going before us, first put into our minds good desires ; it remains with us to bring the same to good effect.² Let us, therefore, in the words of this day's Collect, beg "His continual help" to enable us so to do. Each day as we rise out of our sleep to our daily duties, let us also rise again unto newness of life, as risen members of our risen LORD ; daily mortifying our members which are upon the earth, and daily "yielding ourselves unto GOD as those that are made alive from the dead."

It is only by thus keeping the Christian passover on earth that we can hope to be among those redeemed to GOD by the Blood of the Lamb.³ Only by thus continually rising with CHRIST unto newness of life here, can we hope that when He, Who is our life, shall appear, we also shall "appear with Him in glory."⁴

¹ Epistle, verses 1, 2.

² Collect.

³ Alt. Second Evening Lesson, verse 9.

⁴ Epistle, verse 4.

Easter Monday.

For the Epistle, Acts, x. 34. *Morning Lessons*, Exodus, xv. 1-22; St. Luke, xxiv. 1-13.
Gospel, St. Luke, xxiv. 13. *Evening Lessons*, Canticles, ii. 10; St. Matthew, xxviii. 1-10.

THE first burst of triumphant joy being over, the Church spends the next two days in examining more minutely the different particulars connected with our Saviour's Resurrection, and in impressing upon our minds the blessed truths to be gathered from it. The Second Lesson for the evening, and the Gospel for the day record two distinct appearances of our blessed LORD. We know both from St. Mark and St. John that He had already appeared to Mary Magdalene, (St. Mark, xvi. 9; St. John, xx. 16,) while she stood without at the sepulchre weeping. The manifestation to the three women, which St. Matthew here records,¹ is therefore supposed to be the second time of our LORD's appearing. Of course it is very difficult so to put together the short notices given by different evangelists, as to form a connected history of these great events; but with regard to the women, it is generally thought that while the two other Marys were proceeding to deliver to the Apostles the message of the angels,² the Magdalene was honoured with her Saviour's presence. They, overwhelmed by their feelings of

¹ Second Evening Lesson, verse 9.

² Second Morning Lesson, verses 5, 6.

fear and joy, had not yet fulfilled their mission, when she, with her usual eagerness overtook them by the way, and so the three were again together, when JESUS met them, saying, "All hail."¹ The next appearance which this day's services record, is that of our Saviour joining His disciples on their road to Emmaus;² with their minds full of the wonderful events which had happened, and anxiously inquiring after truth, they were communing together and reasoning, when our Saviour drew near and walked with them. The LORD Himself spoke to them and taught them, though they knew it not. First, He makes known the power of His Resurrection, and then, when He had prepared them for it, He vouchsafes a more sensible manifestation of His presence.³

The Epistle is the discourse of St. Peter upon the Resurrection, delivered to Cornelius and his friends. In every case we find the Resurrection the foundation of the Apostles' doctrine; it is always put forward by them as the necessary completion of the doctrine of the Cross. "If CHRIST be not raised your faith is vain," (1 Cor. xv. 17,) wrote St. Paul to the Corinthians. It was the mention of the Resurrection that at last drew upon him the cries of disbelief and hatred when he preached on Mars' Hill to the Athenians,⁴ and it was touching that doctrine that he was arraigned before the Sanhedrim, before Felix, and before Festus.⁵

So it was of the Resurrection that St. Peter chiefly spoke when, inspired by the Holy Ghost, he preached the first Gospel sermon on the day of

¹ Second Evening Lesson, verse 9.

² Gospel, verse 15;

³ verses 30, 31.

⁴ Acts, xvii. 32;

⁵ xxiii. 6, xxiv. 21, xxvi. 23.

Pentecost.¹ It was of the Resurrection that he spoke to the astonished multitude in the Temple after the healing of the cripple,² and again to the council who were plotting his death;³ while the special hostility of the Sadducees⁴ seems to imply that the doctrine they despised (that of the Resurrection) was the one particularly set forth by St. Peter and his brethren.

The Apostles lived in daily expectation of a cruel death for their faith; no marvel then if they embraced with intense joy, and preached with intense fervour, the doctrine of the Resurrection, to them a theme of the brightest hope and expectation. May *we* so live that the day of Resurrection shall not be to us one of terror, when we shall "call to the mountains to fall on us, and the hills to cover us," but one of joyful fulfilment of lifelong hopes, the dawn of an eternal day of peace and bliss.

The First Morning Lesson, consisting of the song of Miriam, composed in honour of Israel's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt and the peril of the Red Sea, seems designed to encourage us in our duties of thanksgiving and praise. "Who-so giveth Me thanks and praise, he honoureth Me," GOD says; and shall we not find pleasure in meeting together in the house of GOD, to sing His praise Who so gloriously hath triumphed? Yes, He, Who overthrew Pharaoh and his chariots and horsemen in the Red Sea, hath again triumphed, even more gloriously, in His conquest over Satan, sin, and death. Sing unto the LORD, for He hath triumphed gloriously,⁵ and by His death and Resurrection He hath opened a way for His people

¹ Acts, ii. 24;

² iii. 15;

³ iv. 10;

⁴ v. 17.

⁵ First Morning Lesson, verse 21.

through the waters of baptism to the rest of heaven.

And the spring-time of the year, in which this joyful festival falls, has its lessons for us of joy and thanksgiving. The yearly resurrection of nature speaks to us at Easter-tide. The dark clouds and rain¹ of winter gone, the genial warmth of spring returns; the earth, before dead, seems now to teem with life, putting forth her beauteous clothing of flowers² and grass, while the birds seem bent on singing their Maker's praise.³ All seems to tell again the lessons of Good Friday and Easter day. No cross, no crown; the pangs of Calvary followed by the triumphs of the Resurrection morn; the toils and trials of life to be followed by the brightness and peace of heaven. The Saviour's voice, as that of the Bridegroom, seems to summon His Church, the Bride of the Canticles. "Follow Me," He says, "Take up thy cross and follow Me." It is but an easy yoke and a light burden, for I will help you to bear it. Yes, He will be our strength against the dangerous little sins that strew, like hidden thorns, the narrow way; that, like the little foxes, spoil the grapes of the vineyard of the LORD."⁴ "He feedeth among the lilies,"⁵ He is among the saints of His Church, to be their guide, and support, and comfort till the day, the glorious Resurrection day, break, and in the brightness of the Sun of Righteousness the shadows of sin and sorrow, of pain and death, flee away,⁶ and they—without fear of falling—shall be His, and He theirs, for ever.⁶

But then, we have to remember, that the eternal life which these blessed means implant in us will

¹ First Evening Lesson, verse 11;

² verse 12;

³ verse 15; ⁴ verse 16; ⁵ verse 17; ⁶ verse 16.

be either our happiness or our misery. GOD, Who raised up His Son JESUS from the dead, will also raise us up by His own power; but while some rise to everlasting life, others will rise to shame and everlasting contempt. (Daniel xii. 2.)

If then, like Mary Magdalene, we watch and pray; if, like the two disciples, we strive to walk with Him, keeping Him in our thoughts in our going out and coming in, He, who has raised us up to newness of life, will guide us through the changes and chances of this world unto a joyful resurrection. But if, like the sinful Israelites, we in our hearts turn back again into Egypt, "lusting after evil things as they also lusted," and "tempting CHRIST as they also tempted" Him, GOD will not be "well pleased" with us. (1 Cor. x. 5, 6, 9.) We may be overthrown in the wilderness of this world, and, unless we rise again by repentance, may wake up in the world to come, not to the resurrection of life, but to the resurrection of damnation.



Easter Tuesday.

For the Epistle, Acts, xiii. 26. *Morning Lessons*, 2 Kings, xiii. 14-22; St. John, xxi. 1-15.

Gospel, St. Luke, xxiv. 36. *Evening Lessons*, Ezekiel, xxxvii. 1-15; St. John, xxi. 15.

O-DAY again our thoughts are concentrated on the Resurrection of our Blessed LORD. The Gospel shows us the Saviour as He appeared to His Apostles in the upper chamber on the day of His Resurrection. He

came with words of peace,¹ the perplexed hearts of the wondering Apostles were set at rest, and, for the first time since the sad day of the Cross, they experienced joy and gladness.²

As their great commission to the world was to be witnesses³ of the Resurrection, our LORD was pleased to vouchsafe to them many proofs of the truth of that wondrous fact. It was no vision of Him whom they loved that they saw. No, they were permitted to handle, or touch, Him, so as to be convinced of the truth of the sight, while He showed them His Hands and His Feet, that they might recognize in them the death-wounds of the Cross. While still they could scarce believe, He added the testimony of taking food before them,⁴ that they might know Him indeed as still very man, crucified and risen from the dead.

While the Gospel tells us of the appearance of our LORD to His Apostles at the hour of prayer, the Second Lessons tell us of His appearing to them in the midst of their work, to which they had rightly returned.⁵ We are thus taught that CHRIST is to be sought, followed, and found, not only in the hours and moments of prayer, but also in the daily tasks and the ordinary business of life; whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do. So, contentedly following our Saviour, whether to a martyr's death, like St. Peter, or through the many years of a long life, like St. John,⁶ we shall find peace here and perfection hereafter, when, in the Resurrection day, the Good Shepherd shall come to bring His sheep home into His eternal folds.

¹ Gospel, verse 36; ² verse 41; ³ verse 48;

⁴ verse 43. ⁵ Second Morning Lesson, verse 3.

⁶ Second Evening Lesson, verses 19-23.

In the Epistle the teaching of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, concerning the Resurrection, is applied to the fact by St. Paul, who proves to the Jews, from their own Scripture, its truth and necessity.

The two First Lessons, taken immediately from the Old Testament, supply us with two types of the future Resurrection. The bones of Elisha, though dead, cause life;¹ so through the death of CHRIST do we hope to rise to the life immortal. The dry bones of the valley in the vision of Ezekiel, though scattered hither and thither, are gathered bone to bone, and by the breath of the Spirit become instinct with life.² Truly a picture of the final resurrection, when the sea shall give up her dead, and death and the grave shall deliver up the dead that are in them, and again the Holy Spirit shall perform His life-giving task, and the mighty army of the Israel of GOD shall stand for judgment before the throne of Him Who *was dead*, but is alive again, and each shall find a place in his "own land:"³ the children of GOD and the co-heirs of CHRIST with Him in the home of the Father; the children of Satan and workers of iniquity with Judas and all betrayers of CHRIST in their "own place."

¹ First Morning Lesson, verse 21.

² First Evening Lesson, verse 10;

³ verse 14.



First Sunday after Easter.

Epistle, 1 St. John, v. 4.

Morning Lessons, Numbers,
xvi. 1-36; 1 Corinthians,
xv. 1-29.

Gospel, St. John, xx. 19.

Evening Lessons, Numbers,
xvi. 36 or xvii. 1-12; St.
John, xx. 24-30.



THE second Evening Lesson tells us of the special commemoration of to-day. Our LORD had appeared to all His Apostles on the day of His Resurrection in the upper chamber, where they were assembled in fear, but in prayer.¹ All the eleven Apostles were present except St. Thomas, and the account given by the rest seemed to him so improbable that he would not believe. A week after—in sanction, it would seem, of keeping the Resurrection day as the weekly holy-day of the Christian Church—our LORD vouchsafed again to appear in the same manner, in order to convince the doubting Apostle. St. Thomas no longer hesitated; the conviction was deep, and the result the first Christian Creed, “My LORD and my GOD.”² May our faith be as outspoken and as sincere!

St. Paul is very earnest in urging the necessity of this faith in the Resurrection. He goes carefully into the facts and proofs of that wondrous event, in order that his readers may be most thoroughly convinced of that “without which their faith is vain, and they are still in their sins.” The Resurrection is the final and conclusive proof of

¹ Gospel.

² Second Evening Lesson, verse 28.

the Godhead of CHRIST, the proof that death is not annihilation, that CHRIST is only the first-fruits of that resurrection in which we, too, shall bear our part. But how are we to prepare for that day? If we would belong to CHRIST *then*, we must belong to Him *now*; if we would find our place in the Church triumphant, we must have occupied our place worthily in the Church militant.

Our admission into the Church of CHRIST is the first step in our heavenly course. It is in that holy sanctuary (established by CHRIST Himself during the course of these forty days between Easter and Ascension) that Christians who live in the world are yet enabled to live above the world as preparing for heaven; therefore to the institution of this holy Church,¹ our blessings and privileges therein, as well as our dangers, this First Sunday after Easter calls our attention. These services were originally intended for those new converts who, having been baptized on Easter eve, now came to lay up in the Church their baptismal robes as a token of their new duties and privileges; but they are no less suited to us, who, having just risen again with CHRIST, have thus renewed our baptismal covenant, and bound ourselves anew to a holy and a risen life.

The Epistle calls back our thoughts to the water and blood which our Blessed Saviour shed out of His most precious side for the forgiveness of our sins;² for from these healing streams does the Church take her life and her beginning. It is from this fountain, open for sin and for uncleanness, that the Sacraments of the Church derive all their efficacy; the water of Holy Baptism, and

¹ Epistle and Gospel.

² Epistle, verses 6, 8.

the sacred elements in the Holy Communion, being the outward signs whereby the blessings then poured out are now communicated to mankind.

CHRIST, present by His Spirit in these holy ordinances, does through them still wash and strengthen us with that water and blood which once flowed upon the Cross. Through them it is that, though risen and ascended into heaven, He still bears witness on earth in "the Spirit, the water, and the blood."¹

But He who thus provided means for our outward support and refreshment, also provided human instruments by which they might be administered. The same gracious Saviour Who did "shed out of His precious side both water and blood, for the forgiveness of our sins," also "gave commandment to His disciples, that they should go teach all nations, and baptize them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Baptismal Service.) From this commission, given in the Gospel for the day,² do the bishops and pastors of the Church take their authority. They are the visible guides and governors appointed by CHRIST our Head to conduct the Church while she is wandering in the wilderness of this world; and to them, therefore, for their office' sake is our obedience due. Sometimes, indeed, there may be just cause of complaint against the personal conduct or example of those who are called stewards of the mysteries of GOD, for it hath pleased the Almighty to commit those great treasures "to earthen vessels." But we are to remember that it is to the office, not to the man, that honour is due. A soldier may despise the personal vices of his officer, but that soldier is justly punished if he

¹ Epistle, verse 8.

² Gospel, verses 21-23.

refuses to obey his officer's commands. There may have been some in Israel as meek as Moses, and perhaps, personally, as fitted for the high post which he held; we know that many were more eloquent.¹ But GOD had placed Moses in his position of command, and the divinely appointed office of lawgiver might not with impunity be murmured against. So GOD in His wrath made a signal example of the murmurers, and the earth swallowed up Korah and all his company.²

Again—Aaron, we know, had once even headed the people in an act of idolatry which provoked the Almighty to anger; but Aaron was the appointed high priest, and when the people murmured against him, GOD showed His acceptance of his ministry by the miracle of the budding rod.³ So GOD preserves the ministry in His Church, and so long as the people of GOD remember their own holiness,⁴ and respect GOD's will, there can be no danger of that sacerdotalism which exalts the human being above his divine office: but, on the other hand, so long as people trust only to their private judgment, despise the divine ordinances of the Church and her CHRIST-appointed ministry, so long will the bitter plague⁵ of divisions and dissent eat into the life of the Church, and the pit of scepticism swallow up her cold friends or traitorous children. May GOD be pleased to bless the ministry of the Church, that in these troublous times the ordained servants of CHRIST may, like Aaron's rod, blossom forth in deeds of courage and examples of piety and holiness; dealing forth

¹ Exodus, iv. 10.

² First Morning Lesson, verse 32.

³ Alt. First Evening Lesson.

⁴ First Morning Lesson, verse 5.

⁵ First Evening Lesson, verse 49.

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blessings upon the members of the Church, not of their own bestowal, but poured forth through them, from the plenteous storehouse of the mercies of GOD!



Second Sunday after Easter.

Epistle, 1 St. Peter, ii. 19. *Morning Lesson*, Numbers,

xx. 1-14.

Gospel, St. John, x. 11.

Evening Lesson, Numbers,

xx. 14 to xxi. 10, or xxi. 10.

IN **A**ST Sunday we were taught to look to the Church as the fold in which we shall find safety and protection, while, like lost sheep, we wander through the dangers of this troublesome world. To-day we learn to look up to CHRIST as the Shepherd Who receives us into this fold, and feeds and sustains us in it. "The good Shepherd," says our LORD Himself in the Gospel, "giveth his life for his sheep;"¹ so was CHRIST unto us a sacrifice for sin,² "bearing our sins in His own body on the tree."³ As a good shepherd delivers his sheep from the wolf at the expense of his own life, so did CHRIST through His death destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. (Hebrews, ii. 14.)

But a good shepherd is not only the saviour and defender of his flock, he is their leader also. When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. (St. John, x. 4.) So is CHRIST to us not only a "sacrifice for sin," but also an "ensample

¹ Gospel, verse 11.

² Collect.

³ Epistle, verse 24.

of godly life."¹ He expects that those whom He has brought into his fold should "hear His voice, and follow Him." (St. John, x. 27.) The sheep have no other means than this of showing their sense of their shepherd's kindness; neither have we any other means of showing our gratitude for the "inestimable benefit" of our Saviour's sacrifice, than by "following the blessed steps of His most holy life."¹

It is on this account that the Epistle sets before us our Saviour's conduct to His enemies, as being one point in which the disciples of CHRIST may imitate the example of their Master. He, Who was Himself "brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth," (Isaiah, liii. 7,) would have His followers to bless them that curse them, and to pray for those that despitefully use and persecute them; when they are reviled, to revile not again; when they suffer, to "threaten not," but to "commit themselves unto Him that judgeth righteously;"² copying as disciples of the Good Shepherd, the harmless and inoffensive character of the sheep. But it is not in the act of forgiveness alone, that we are called upon to follow the blessed steps of CHRIST's most holy life. Our profession is, to follow in all things the example of our LORD, and to be made like unto Him. (Baptismal Service.) "Our LORD's life in the flesh," says Horneck, "was such, that there is no member of His, of any age or station, who may not find in Him a pattern and a guide. He was subject to His parents; so may we be obedient and submissive to ours. He did resist temptations, that we might not be overcome by them;

¹ Collect.

² Epistle, verse 23.

He went about doing good, that we might learn from Him not to be backward in works of charity; He did deny Himself, that we might not indulge our vain desires. He was meek; so should this meekness, then, be the rule of all our actions. He was faithful in all His Father's house; so should we be in all duties and callings and relations. He was entirely resigned to His Father's pleasure, under the severest chastisements; let us pray that He would teach us this self-resignation too."

To follow even at a distance such a heavenly pattern, is indeed a high and lofty aim, but we must "endeavour ourselves" so to do.¹ It is for *us* to make the effort, and then the quickening spirit will aid our endeavours, and through Him we shall be able to rise to newness of life. We are right in having the deepest sense of our own powerlessness to fight the battle alone; but such humility becomes sin when it leads us either to inaction on our own part or to doubt of the power of GOD to carry us through all. Moses, at one time, allowed his humility to degenerate into doubt. He could not believe the power of GOD to work the miracle promised, by the simple word of his mouth, and, fearful of failure, he struck the rock to which he was commanded but to speak.² The punishment of Moses was his exclusion from the land of promise.³

As we pass through the world; members of the Church of CHRIST; following in His footsteps; led on by the bright light of His example; nourished by the manna of the Sacraments; guided by the Urim and Thummim of the Holy Spirit; like the Israelites of old, we have many and terrible

¹ Collect.

² Morning Lesson;

³ verse 12.

enemies to encounter, temptations both from within and from without. But though at times we find obstacles to holiness which impede our way, as Edom checked the conquering Israel,¹ yet may we pass them by, ever guarding indeed against them, but going forward conquering and to conquer, sure that, in GOD's good time, even as Edom before the wrath of David and Joab,² our greatest foes will be annihilated for us by the almighty hand of GOD.

The Evening Lesson adds another picture from the desert to typify the commemoration of the season. The Israelites, bitten by the fiery serpents, looked, at the word of Moses, to the Brazen Serpent lifted up in their midst, and, from the extremity of deathly sickness, they were raised again to life. So must we run the race of life, "looking unto JESUS," (Heb. xii. 2,) and daily endeavouring ourselves to follow in the blessed steps of His most holy life; and so, being raised by Him to newness of life, in His strength we may, as a Church, go forth to overwhelm the enemies that would oppress us,³ and follow Him, the Captain of our salvation, over the Jordan of death to the final resurrection in the Land of Promise.

Let us, then, pray (especially at this season) that He, "Who brought again our LORD JESUS CHRIST from the dead, the great Shepherd of the sheep, would make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight." (Hebrews, xiii. 20, 21.) If we have erred, and strayed from His ways, let us pray that as a shepherd seeketh out his sheep, so He

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 21, 22.

² 1 Kings, xi. 15.

³ Alt. Evening Lesson.

would seek us and deliver us out of all the places whither we have been scattered, (Ezekiel, xxxiv. 12,) so that with those other sheep whom He will hereafter bring to Himself, we may all be made one fold under one Shepherd.¹

To the faithful and obedient members of His fold God has promised that they "shall never perish, neither shall any man be able to pluck them out of His Father's hand." (St. John, x. 28.) He has said to them, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you His kingdom." (St. Luke, xii. 32.) And "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent."



Third Sunday after Easter.

Epistle, 1 St. Peter, ii. 11. *Morning Lesson*, Numbers, xxii.
Gospel, St. John, xvi. 16. *Evening Lesson*, Numbers, xxiii. or xxiv.

HAVING been "received into the congregation of CHRIST'S flock," and having made CHRIST'S Church our home, we must walk as "strangers and pilgrims" here on earth. This is what the Church on this day would teach us to do. The state of Christians here on earth answers to that of the Israelites in the wilderness. They were strangers and sojourners as all their fathers were, journeying onward towards that good land whither GOD would bring them;—so have we here no continuing city, but we seek one to come. (Hebrews, xiii. 14.) As "strangers

¹ Gospel, verse 16.

and pilgrims," we "have our conversation in heaven," "looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God."

But as the Israelites were laid under obligations by their privileges, so are we. Like them, we have to pass through the wilderness of this world as "strangers and pilgrims."¹ As strangers, then, who have here no continuing city, but who seek one to come, we must "set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth," and as pilgrims who turn not aside to the right hand or to the left, until they reach the spot to which their vows have led them; so we, "forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth towards those things that are before, must press forward towards the prize of our high calling." Like them also we have enemies to encounter in our Christian course; and the corrupt desires and inclinations of our own hearts, which the Epistle calls "fleshly lusts," are the enemies from whom we have most to dread.

Of these, some one or other is continually rising up against us, clothed in some tempting form, to turn us out of the right way. Selfishness, pride, and uncharitableness, love of the world, and forgetfulness of GOD and of holy things, are among the beginnings of those "works of the flesh" of which St. Paul says, that they who "do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of GOD." (Gal. v. 21.) These, then, are the things which we must "eschew"² or "abstain from,"³ as contrary to our Christian profession; for they are the enemies we bound ourselves to resist, when we promised manfully to fight under CHRIST's banner

¹ Epistle, verse xi.

³ Epistle.

² Collect.

against the world, the flesh, and the devil, unto our life's end. (Baptismal Service.)

The history of Balaam, as told in the Lessons of the day, serves to illustrate some of the dangers of those, who are only half-hearted servants of GOD—Christians, but not Christ-like. When Balaam was first sent for to curse the children of Israel, he was distinctly made aware that the invitation was contrary to GOD's will, and that he was not to go.¹ Instead of putting all thoughts of the temptation from his mind, he refuses in such a way as to encourage a second application. The princes of Balak come a second time, and, as a punishment, GOD grants his desire, and so permits him to enter into a severer trial of his obedience.² A lukewarm resistance of sin will always thus lay us open to severer temptation, and GOD grants, at times, the desire of the wicked as a chastisement rather than a blessing. The *heart* must be right as well as the immediate action if we would really "eschew those things that are contrary to our profession." By a miracle on the road,³ GOD opened the eyes of the erring prophet to his sin; just as at times, by the motions of His Holy Spirit or the stirrings of conscience, He reminds His children of their faults. Balaam arrives at last at his destination, and from the tops of the high mountains of Moab, contemplates with awe the vast multitudes of Israel.⁴ With the eye of prophecy he sees in the far distance the coming of the Messiah, the bright and morning star, the King of Israel.⁵ Every chance of repentance is held out to him, and at first he yields to his better

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 12 ;

² verse 20 ;

³ verse 31.

Evening Lesson.

⁵ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 17.

impulses, and goes back unrewarded to his home. But it would seem that the temptation of his avarice was too strong, and he returned to Moab; through his advice Israel was lured into sin,¹ and he who desired to die the death of the righteous, actually died the death of the wicked among the enemies of God.² But while we blame Balaam's stubbornness let us beware lest we fall into his sin. At Baptism we were made His children, and the Collect reminds us of the solemn profession which in holy baptism we took upon ourselves. We were then admitted into the "fellowship of CHRIST's religion,"³ that is, we were separated from the world around to be brought into the "general Assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." (Heb. xii. 23.) GOD spake to Balaam, and guided him in his choice between good and evil, and the Holy Spirit, Who was given to us in our baptism, guides us in our way if it be right, or stands in mercy before us to stop us in the path of evil. It is He Who leads us into all truth, and when we are in error brings us back into the way of righteousness.⁴ He comforts us in tribulation; and when we have erred and strayed from the right path, it is He Who brings us to the foot of the Cross, as unto the only "sure refuge" of repenting Christians. Thus we are indeed a holy nation, a peculiar people, ordained that we should show forth the praises of Him Who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. (1 St. Peter, ii. 9. Compare Morning Lesson, verse 22.)

To that blessed time when sorrow shall be turned into gladness and heaviness into joy the Gospel of

¹ Numbers, xxxi. 16;

² Collect.

³ verse 8.

⁴ Epistle, verse 11.

the day begins to raise our thoughts. Yet a little while, says our LORD Himself,¹ and we shall see Him—Him Whom we have seen but by faith, as through a glass darkly, we shall after “a little while” see “face to face.” If, then, we do but endure unto the end, we shall at that day bless GOD that we have been taught to walk through the world only as strangers and pilgrims; we shall find that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us,” (Rom. viii. 18,) and that “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” (2 Cor. iv. 17.)



Fourth Sunday after Easter.

Epistle, St. James, i. 17. *Morning Lesson*, Deuteronomy,
iv. 1-23.
Gospel, St. John xvi. 5. *Evening Lesson*, Deuteronomy,
iv. 23-41, or v.

AS we draw nearer to the festivals of Ascension Day and Whitsuntide, the Church tells us more clearly of that blessed place to which we are journeying, and of the Holy Spirit Who is to conduct us thither. The Collect speaks of it as the place where alone true joys are to be found. In the Gospel we behold our Blessed LORD going up² to prepare a mansion there, for us, while the whole tone of the services is to show how the Holy Comforter is even now training us for its enjoyment.

This world is our trial; heaven is our rest. We

¹ Gospel, verses 16, 22;

² verse 5.

must pass through the waves of this troublesome world before we can arrive at the land of everlasting rest. How to pass through them safely is what we have now to learn. We can, therefore, have no better precepts for our guidance than those by which the Israelites were directed in their wanderings, and which are read to us out of the Book of Deuteronomy. In this Morning's Lesson Moses, the lawgiver of Israel, is reminding the people of their privileges and corresponding duties. GOD, he says, had made a covenant with them, such as He had not made with any other nations upon earth. He had taken them from the midst of Egypt by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm.¹ None other nation was there so great who had GOD so nigh unto them in all things that they called upon Him for.² He had guided them by the light of His presence, and Himself had spoken unto them out of the midst of the fire.³ Out of the heaven He had made them to hear His voice, that He might instruct them, and teach them in the way wherein they should go; and lastly, He had promised that in the days of tribulation He would be, to those who turned to Him, a merciful and gracious GOD. And for all this, He only required of them that they should "take heed lest they forget the things which their eyes had seen."⁴ He charged them that they should keep clear of the idolatrous practices of the nations through whose land they would have to pass,⁵ walking in all the statutes and judgments which He should speak in their ears, and that, with eyes fixed on the pro-

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 34.² Morning Lesson, verse 7³ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 4.⁴ Morning Lesson, verse 9;⁵ verse 15, &c.

mised land, they should neither turn aside to the right hand nor to the left from the way which led thereto.¹

The only means, then, by which we may obtain true happiness, is to follow GOD's commandments rather than our own wishes, to love GOD's will rather than our own. This was the object of all the injunctions so repeatedly urged upon the newly-redeemed people of Israel, as it is also the end of all those holy precepts which are repeatedly urged upon the newly-redeemed people of CHRIST now. Our Divine Redeemer urges us so to love Him above all things here, that we may obtain His glorious promises hereafter; and, promising us His gracious aid, He tells us not to be afraid of those enemies who would obstruct our progress thither. Lest, however, the "good things" which, even in His kingdom on earth, GOD mercifully promises, should make us careless and secure, the Lessons repeatedly warn us to beware, lest in the midst of blessings we forget the LORD our GOD.² We, as the Israelites, have many enemies to cast out, which are not to be conquered all at once, or without labour. The Cross is signed on our forehead at baptism in token of this constant warfare. Daily, and by little and little, must we overcome some wrong temper, cast out some unholy thought, or bring into subjection some ungovernable or worldly wish.

The power thus to regulate our unruly wills and affections does not, however, belong to our sinful nature. It cometh from GOD only, and must be reckoned amongst those good and perfect gifts which are sent down upon us from above.³ How

¹ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 32.

² Evening Lesson, verse 23, &c.

³ Epistle, verse 17.

GOD, in His goodness, bestows it upon us, we learn from the Epistle and Gospel for this day. When, in holy baptism, He "begat us,"¹ by His Spirit, unto newness of life, our sinful nature was changed and sanctified. The "word of truth" was then "engrafted"² upon our corrupt hearts, the prayer of the Church for us was, that our "old Adam," or sinful nature, might be buried in us, and the new man raised up in us; that all carnal affections might die in us, and all things belonging to the Spirit live and grow in us. (See Baptismal Service.) Thus was "the Word" thoroughly joined to us, and made a part of ourselves,—and thus did GOD give unto us "that thing which by nature we cannot have." But even in a grafted tree the old wild shoots will sometimes sprout out unless they are continually pruned and cut back; and so, even in our renewed nature, carnal affections, unless continually mortified and kept in check, will be likely to live and grow again; therefore does the Apostle desire us to "lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness," that so we may "receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save our souls."²

Seeing, then, how this precious gift, once given, might be corrupted and lost, GOD, in His mercy, vouchsafes to renew it, in answer to our prayers. JESUS CHRIST, our Lord and Saviour, ascended into heaven, in order (as we read in this day's Gospel) that He might pour down upon us the continual dew of His blessing. From thence He sends the Blessed Spirit to be our teacher, our guide, our comforter.³ It is this Blessed Spirit Who reproves us for our sins, and Who leads us

¹ Epistle, verse 18;

² Gospel, verse 7.

³ verse 21.

into righteousness; and by Him it is that the devil, or "prince of this world," the chief of all our spiritual enemies, is brought to judgment and cast out.¹ He helpeth our infirmities, and, like a tender guide,² leads us gently in the paths which suit us best. If, then, we strive to lay aside all carnal and corrupt affections, GOD, the Father of Lights, will give us His Holy Spirit to draw us after Him, and by His aid we shall be enabled to order our unruly wills and affections, until "every thought is brought into obedience unto CHRIST."



Fifth Sunday after Easter.

Epistle, St. James, i. 22. *Morning Lesson*, Deuteronomy vi.

Gospel, St. John, xvi. 23. *Evening Lesson*, Deuteronomy, ix. or x.

WE have been taught to value the "good things" of CHRIST's kingdom. We have learned to look forward to them, and place our affections upon them; it now only remains for us to pray for them, and prepare our hearts to receive them. That such is the object of the present season, we find by the services which are appointed for it.

This has ever been a period of special supplication in the Church of CHRIST. Our Blessed LORD is now ascending into heaven to pray the Father for us.³ We, who on earth are by faith contemplating our ascending Saviour, choose this time to

¹ Gospel, verses 8-11;

² verse 13;

³ verse 26.

implore, that, by His gracious intercession, He would procure for us all things necessary for our souls and bodies. For the latter we reserve to-morrow and the two following days. (See Rogation days.) It is for the wants of our souls that we supplicate Him to-day.

The service for last Sunday prepared us for the Collect which we use this day. Then we learnt from Holy Scripture that "every good and perfect gift cometh from above;" now, addressing ourselves to Him from Whom all good things do come, we ask for the best and highest of His gifts—the Holy Spirit.¹

From the words of this prayer we learn something of the way in which the Holy Spirit acts upon our souls.

His office in directing the souls of men is very much what that of a guide is in directing their bodies. A guide shows us the right way, and leads us towards our destination by the best and safest paths, but he does not force us to walk therein. He can lead in safety only those who are willing and ready to follow him. Just so is it with our Heavenly Guide. By "His holy inspiration" GOD the HOLY GHOST puts good thoughts into our minds, but He does not force us to act upon them. He points out what good things we ought to do, but upon us it must depend whether we shall so follow His merciful guidance as to be enabled to perform the same.

Seeing, then, that GOD's "holy inspiration" profits us only in proportion to its fruits, we must follow St. James's injunction in the Epistle for this day to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only."² Carefully seeking the guidance of GOD's

¹ Collect.

² Epistle, verse 22.

Holy Spirit, we are here taught to search into our hearts that we may know what "manner of men"¹ we are. Having discovered what is amiss in us, we should then yield up our souls to His holy inspiration, and so should we go forward in all those holy tempers which are here laid down as the marks of "true religion."

The Holy Ghost, ruling and directing us, enables us to exercise restraint over ourselves, and charity to others.² He desires to keep us "altogether unspotted from the world;" and in the possession of such a frame of mind we should find, even here, a foretaste of that happiness which is in store for us hereafter.

While GOD the Holy Ghost thus pleads with us here, GOD the Son is pleading for us in heaven above. To this holy mystery, then, the Church now directs our thoughts. The case of Moses and the Israelites in the Old Testament affords us a type of this heavenly doctrine. In the Morning Lesson Moses, the teacher and guide of Israel, warned of his coming death, recapitulates to them the history of their deliverance³ and wanderings; he reminds them of their sins, he calls to their memory the many mercies of GOD wrought for them through his means.

The Almighty had indeed already crowned them with every blessing, which a people could desire; but Moses had been the mediator through whom these benefits had been conferred. When they needed anything, it was Moses who asked the LORD for it, when they had sinned, it was Moses who prayed to the LORD that He would forgive their iniquity, even at the expense of having his

¹ Epistle, verse 24;

² verses 26, 27.

³ Morning Lesson, verse 21, &c.

own name blotted out from under heaven.¹ (Compare Exodus, xxxii. 32.)

This office of Moses is but a very faint type of the gracious work which our Divine Redeemer even now carries on at the right hand of GOD.

Before His Ascension, CHRIST, our merciful Intercessor, addressed His disciples in the words recorded in the Gospel for this day. He had before inculcated the precepts of love and obedience, as the only paths in which to walk safely through the dangers of this great and howling wilderness. Now that He is about to leave them, He reminds them of all the mercies bestowed on them through His means ; and He comforts them with the assurance, that, when removed from their sight, He will be still more powerfully present with them to help them, and hear their prayers, than when actually present with them in the body.² Thus does the LORD even now look down from heaven upon the children of men. As Man, He compassionates our infirmities ; as GOD, He is able to give us all we pray for. He bids us "ask in His name and we shall receive ;"³ He will "give us whatsoever we ask, that our joy may be full."⁴ He knows all the struggles to which we are subject while passing through the wilderness of this world, but He bids us "be of good cheer, for that He has overcome the world."⁵ He gives us assistance in difficulties, comfort in trials ; He provides us with those things which are needful for our bodies as well as for our souls, and blesses us with a peace which the world cannot give. Such are some of the "good things"⁶ with which GOD even now refreshes His people

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 14.

² verses 23, 24 ;

³ Collect.

⁴ Gospel, verses 23, &c. ;

⁵ verse 33.

who pray to Him on earth. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the good things which He hath prepared for them in His kingdom in heaven. (I Cor. ii. 9.)

*The Rogation Days.*

HE meaning of the word *Rogation* is the same as that of Litany, namely, prayer or supplication; and the Rogation days (which are the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before the festival of our LORD'S Ascension) are therefore so called, because they are set apart by the Church for earnest prayer and supplication.

From many examples in Scripture, we find it has ever been the custom that, at certain solemn seasons, prayer and intercession should be offered up to Almighty GOD, to implore that He would turn away from His people those temporal punishments which their sins had deserved, and bestow upon them, with other national blessings, the comforts of plenty and of peace. (Deut. xxvi.; Neh. ix. 6.) The Church, following in this, as in all other things, the teaching of Holy Scripture, ordered, as early as the fifth century, that these days should be so observed; and most fitly has she selected this particular season for the purpose,—for as it is only by the intercession which our Redeemer, since His Ascension, has been carrying on at the right hand of GOD, that our prayers are ever heard, how can we better prepare ourselves to celebrate with due thankfulness the coming festival,

than by claiming for ourselves those benefits which His Ascension and consequent mediation have procured, and thus realizing more fully how expedient it was for us that He "should go away?" (St. John, xvi. 7.) This, it seems, is what the Church would teach us by choosing as the Gospel for Rogation Sunday, that part of our LORD's last discourse, when, in connection with His "leaving the world and going to His Father,"¹ He says, "*At that day ye shall ask in My Name;*"² and again, "*Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My Name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*"³

This being the season when we have especial need of GOD's blessings upon the fruits of the earth which are springing up, it was ordered at the Reformation, that the minister and principal persons of each parish should walk in procession round its bounds, and there, while beholding GOD's benefits, the people were exhorted by their minister to bless GOD for them, and to pray for their continuance. After repeating the 104th Psalm, they were accustomed to join in prayer in the parish church. Though this is one amongst those old customs, of which the outward observance has unfortunately fallen into disuse, yet every Churchman, who sees the Rogation days marked out by the Church as one of her yearly fasts, will not be acting the part of one of her true sons, if he fail to keep them by special and earnest supplications and intercessions. There are numberless examples in Scripture to prove that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," (St. James, v. 16,) and that whole nations have by its means been saved from destruction. We have

¹ St. John, xvi. 28;

² verse 26;

³ verse 24.

only to turn to the First Lesson for last Sunday evening, to see that the name of GOD's chosen people was on the point of being blotted out from under heaven, had not Moses fallen down before the LORD in fasting and prayer for forty days and forty nights.¹ The prayers of Abraham prevailed so far with GOD, that the Almighty promised that if "ten righteous" could be found in the devoted cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, they should be spared (Gen. xviii.); and Lot, by his intercession, saved the city of Zoar. (Gen. xix.) The Ninevites, by their prayers and fastings, turned GOD's wrath away from their city; and Esther (Esther, iv. 15, 16) and her maidens saved the Jews from the destruction impending over them. We know not, then, from what future calamities our country might be rescued, if such solemn times and ordinances as these were better observed; for though man planteth and watereth, it is GOD alone Who giveth the increase; and we know not how soon He may be pleased to withdraw those seasons of plenty with which He has hitherto blessed us,² if we are so negligent of the means of procuring their continuance.

To us, then, may be applied the warning addressed to the Israelites: "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy GOD for the good land which He hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy GOD, in not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I command thee this day; lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and

¹ Deuteronomy, ix. 25, &c.

² Written in the year 1844.

thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and *thou forget the Lord thy God.*"¹

Let us, then, who have been too forgetful of Him, "from Whom," as the Collect teaches us, "all good things do come," and by Whom alone they can be continued, turn to ALMIGHTY GOD, at this time especially, in weeping, fasting, and prayer,—and if, through the mediation of Moses, the prayers of GOD'S people of old were heard, what may we not hope, as a Church and a nation, when we offer up our supplications in the name of that All-powerful Mediator, Who even as at this time went up into heaven "there to appear in the presence of GOD for us?"



Ascension Day.

For the Epistle, Acts, i. 1. *Morning Lessons*, Daniel, vii. 9-15; St. Luke, xxiv. 44.
Gospel, St. Mark, xvi. 14. *Evening Lessons*, 2 Kings, ii. 1-16; Hebrews, iv.
Psalms, viii., xv., xxi., xxiv., xlvii., cviii.

HAVING now followed our Divine Redeemer through the course of His holy life, painful death, and glorious resurrection, we celebrate to-day His triumphant Ascension into heaven to sit at the right hand of GOD. Thus each of these festivals of the Church is intended—first, to confirm our faith in the several articles of our Creed, and secondly, to teach us the right practical use of each of these articles; therefore, by observ-

¹ Deuteronomy, viii. 10-15.

ing the festivals in order, and learning the practical lessons they bring with them, we shall find that the right use of each will successively prepare us for the next; and so, going on step by step as the Church directs, our Creed, instead of being an empty form of words, will lead us to that right faith on which depends our salvation, and then to holiness, which is the fruit of faith. At Easter, we were taught to rise with CHRIST unto newness of life, in order that we might be made partakers of the benefits of His resurrection. The Sundays which intervened between the festival of Easter and that of the Ascension, by instructing us that this "newness of life" consists in walking through this world only as a passage to heaven, naturally led us to fix our affections on heaven and heavenly things, and thus gradually prepared us to celebrate the Ascension of our LORD, according to the spirit of this day's Collect. We are here taught that to do this rightly, it is not enough to believe that our LORD JESUS CHRIST has ascended into the heavens; we must also "in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell;"¹ that is, our hearts must ascend after Him here, in true devotion; we must be diligent in using those means of grace, by which He dwells in us and we in Him; and lastly, as our hearts will unavoidably be where our treasure is, we must, if we wish to dwell with Him continually, place our hopes and affections not on earth, but on heaven and heavenly things.

This, then, is the spirit in which we are to enter upon the services for this holy day. Let us now consider what part the Ascension of our LORD has in the mysterious scheme of Redemption, that

¹ Collect.

knowing the benefits we derive from it, we may celebrate this festival, not only with heavenly-mindedness, but with that gratitude and joy which the recurrence of it should ever call forth.

All the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Levitical law being intended as types or representations of the mysteries of our redemption, which the Gospel unfolds to us, the best way of meditating on those mysteries is to refer to the types under which the law represented them. The sacrifice of our LORD on the Cross was represented, under the law, when the high priest offered a sin-offering for the sins of the people, (see Lev. xvi. 16;) but as, in order to complete the atonement which the sin-offering had begun, the high priest entered into the holy of holies with the blood of the sacrifice, (Heb. ix. 7; Lev. xvi. 2;) so the Messiah, having offered up Himself for the sin-offering, entered into the highest heavens to present His Blood as the justification for our sins. This is what St. Paul teaches us in the second Lesson of this evening, where he speaks of "our great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, JESUS CHRIST the Son of GOD."¹ Thither He has ascended to make intercession for us; and the knowledge of this fact must be a perpetual source of thanksgiving to us, knowing, as we do, that in Him we have a sympathiser in all our troubles, "for that we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched by a feeling of our infirmities, but Who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."² CHRIST'S intercession is the benefit for which we thank GOD on this holy festival. No wonder, then, that the Church should celebrate with holy joy the day when our Saviour not only completed our redemption, but

¹ Second Evening Lesson, verse 14;

² verse 15.

began that intercession through which He applies the benefits of it to all who come to Him.

The Church has, therefore, appointed such Proper Psalms and Lessons, as shall lead us to make a practical use of that joy, that, dwelling with Him in heart and mind here, we may be fit to enjoy His glorious presence in heaven. In the Psalms we celebrate our LORD'S Ascension by singing joyful praises to Him Who is "gone up with the sound of a trumpet,"¹ and we desire to "awake early,"² that we may sing and give praise to Him Who has set Himself above the heavens, and Whose glory is above all the earth.³ In order, however, to enter into those joyful strains, we must still follow the teaching of the Church in her selection of Proper Psalms, and first find out whether we are likely to be of the number of those who will ascend after Him in joy and glory. "Who then," let us ask with the Psalmist, "shall ascend into the hill of the LORD, or who shall rise up in His holy place?"⁴ "Who shall dwell in His tabernacle, or who shall rest upon His holy hill?"⁵ "He that leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doeth the thing that is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart."⁶ "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart: and hath not lift up his mind unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour."⁷ "This is the generation of them that seek Him: even of them that seek thy face, O Jacob!"⁸ Of "this generation," then, must we be, if we would join in the rejoicings of the Church militant on earth, or hope to be admitted to those of the Church triumphant in heaven.

¹ Psalm xlvii. 5.

⁴ Psalm xxiv. 3.

⁷ Psalm xxiv. 4;

² Psalm cviii. 2;

⁵ Psalm xv. 1;

⁸ verse 6.

³ verse 5.

⁶ verse 2

In the first Morning Lesson we read of Daniel's vision of the fulfilment of the Psalmist's prophecy.¹ The eye of the prophet pierces, as it were, the cloud that hides the ascending Saviour from our gaze, and sees Him entering the presence of the Father and receiving the dominion over all,² after the victory of the Cross and the triumph of the Resurrection and Ascension. Of the Ascension a type is given us in the first Evening Lesson, where the translation of Elijah is related. That event may be considered as a very exact type, especially in one particular, that as, after the ascent of Elijah, a double portion of his spirit rested on Elisha, his follower;³ so, after the Ascension of our LORD, His disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit, through Whose assistance we also hope to be exalted to that same place whither He has gone before.

Having thus contemplated the Ascension of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST by types of the Old Testament we shall be fully prepared to enter into the narrative of it, which we read in the Second Lesson for the Morning, as well as in the Gospel for the day. The Scripture selected for the Epistle not only confirms all the circumstances before related in the Lesson, but, by recording the words addressed by the Angels to the Apostles, also affords us a precept with which we may do well to conclude our meditations upon this day. Let us not, then, content ourselves with idly "gazing up"⁴ after our LORD into heaven, but diligently prepare for His return. Let us strive, even now, "in heart and mind thither to ascend." Let us show, by practising those virtues to which the

¹ Psalm viii. 6.

² First Morning Lesson, verse 14.

³ First Evening Lesson, verse 9.

⁴ Epistle, verse 11.

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Psalms of this day exhort us, that we are of the "generation of them that seek Him,"¹ and consequently of those who hope to ascend into His holy hill; and let us follow and profit by the gracious gift of that "Comforter" who is promised as the consequence of His Ascension. Thus, and thus only, shall we so truly dwell with Him here, that when "He shall so come in like manner as He went up into heaven,"² we may hope to be of the number of those who look for Him, and to whom He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Heb. ix. 28.)



Sunday after Ascension Day.

Epistle, 1 St. Peter, iv. 7. *Morning Lesson*, Deuteronomy, xxx.
Gospel, St. John, xv. 26, *Evening Lesson*, Deuteronomy, xxxiv. or Joshua, i.

THIS week is called expectation-week, in remembrance of the state in which the Apostles remained from the time of our LORD'S Ascension until the descent of the Holy Spirit; and is to be employed by us, as it was by them, in praying for the gifts of the Blessed Comforter, and preparing for His reception. The services are intended to lead us on from the festival of the Ascension to that of Whitsunday, for while they keep up the spirit of the former by still contemplating our LORD'S exaltation in heaven, they prepare us for the latter, by looking to the Holy Spirit as the Guide Whom He has left to conduct

¹ Psalm xxiv. 6.

² Epistle, verse 17

us to Himself. For this Holy Spirit, then, the Collect prays. The Epistle teaches us how to use His precious gifts, when bestowed,¹ and in the Gospel He is promised under the name of "the Comforter."² The Collect opens with mingled expressions of joy and sorrow; we, like the Apostles, rejoice at the event which has procured for us a Mediator at the right hand of GOD, while with them we grieve at the absence of our LORD; the second part of the Collect prays for an increase of that Spirit, through Whom we hope to be both guided and comforted here and exalted to glory hereafter; while the close of the Collect, by reminding us that He Who is now our Intercessor is also our GOD, encourages us to hope that our petitions may not be offered in vain. The Epistle carries us back to the lesson inculcated on Ascension Day, to look forward to the "end of all things,"³ when He Whose Ascension we have been commemorating, shall "so come in like manner as He went up into heaven." (Acts, i. 11.) It teaches us that to be prepared for His return, we must now cultivate the duties of prayer, watchfulness, sobriety, and charity.⁴ Having performed the first part of these by praying in the Collect for the gift of the Holy Comforter, let us use watchfulness in diligently improving those precious gifts, so that they may bring forth in us the fruits of sobriety and charity. By sobriety is here meant, exercising such a restraint over ourselves as to bring our own desires in subjection to our duty; and "charity" includes love to GOD and man; therefore in these two virtues are comprehended our duty to GOD, our neighbour, and ourselves; and by striving to

¹ Epistle, verse 10.
Epistle, verse 7;

² Gospel, verse 26.
⁴ verses 7, 8.

perform them to the best of our power in the different stations in which GOD has placed us, we shall be making the best use of the talent committed to our charge, and we shall be preparing for our LORD's return.

The Lessons for the day carry out the spirit of the Church's teaching during this season. The Evening Lesson tells us of Moses' death ; a type perhaps of the Ascension of our LORD, in that, after years of toil, and teaching, and suffering, he quietly ascended the mountain pointed out by GOD, from its summit to behold the object of his labours ; on the one hand the Israelites brought by him from the land of bondage, on the other the land of promise into which they were about to enter. So our LORD, in a far higher sense, rested from His labours of redemption to look down from heaven upon the children bought by His Blood from the bondage of Satan, about to enter, under the guidance of His Holy Spirit, into the New Covenant of the Church.

As the Evening Lesson gives the type of the season we are commemorating, the Morning Lesson seems to point to the special subject of the day—quiet, contemplative waiting. Moses, while awaiting the final message which should apprise him of his death, has been recapitulating the miracles and mercies of GOD towards His people. He has been reminding them of the blessings to come if they will obey and follow the LORD¹ their Saviour, and of the curses and destruction which would be the result of disobedience.² He says that life and death have been held out, but that the decision remains with *them*.³ Our thoughts at

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 10.

² verse 17 ;

³ verse 15.

this season naturally take the same course. The mercies of GOD in the redemption; the example set us by the Divine pattern during His human life; the results of that work; our own calling to be His disciples; *our* powerlessness; *His* intercession; *our* feebleness; *His* promise of the Comforter. While inclined to despair at our weakness and ingratitude, when so much has been done for us, we are taught, (as Joshua was so emphatically taught in undertaking his great work¹) to be strong and of a good courage; for that He, the great Lawgiver, the Saviour, the Author and Giver of Life, though ascended into heaven, doth not leave us without a guide—His Holy Spirit.

Therefore let us pray, especially at this time, for the guidance of this heavenly Monitor; let us reverence Him by seeking Him in all the ordinances of His Church, and making a good use of the talents which He bestows.

Being thus guided on earth by His counsels, we may hope to be led on like the Apostles, from gazing up after our LORD into heaven, (Acts, i. 11,) to being received by Him in glory.

¹ Alt. Evening Lesson, verses 6, 7, 9.



Whitsunday.

For the Epistle, Acts, ii. 1. *Morning Lessons*, Deuteronomy, xvi. 1-18; Romans, viii. 1-18.
Gospel, St. John, xiv. 15. *Evening Lessons*, Isaiah, xi.; or Ezekiel, xxxvi. 25; Galatians, v. 16; or Acts, xviii. 24, to xix. 21.
Psalms, xlvi. lxviii. civ. cxlv.

THIS day, on which we commemorate the miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, is set apart to consider the benefits conveyed to us by the coming of the Holy Spirit, and to praise GOD for them.

It is the office of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity to perfect the work of our salvation by applying to us the merits of CHRIST's redemption, and restoring to us that spiritual life which our nature had forfeited at the fall; therefore the day on which He first came to dwell with His Church, must ever be commemorated by her members as one of holy joy and thanksgiving.

The name of this great festival is most probably derived from the German "Pfingsten," which means fifty, and is the word used as the translation of Pentecost. This would very rightly connect it with the festival of the Jewish Church, on which the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred. The Jewish festival of Pentecost coming fifty days after the Passover (when the harvest was begun) was the occasion of offering up the first results of that harvest, the two first loaves of the reaped corn. The Christian Whitsuntide coming fifty days after

the Resurrection, when CHRIST's work was completed and His harvest of souls begun, was the occasion of the offering of the first fruits of that harvest, the three thousand first converts to the Church of Christ. To their eager question, "What shall we do?" St. Peter had answered, "Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost."

And on this day, there is joy to us in the thought, that we, too, have received that holy cleansing, and are partakers of that precious gift. This cleansing power of the Holy Spirit may, however, be annulled by our own evil deeds, and, therefore, our prayer in the Collect is, that He Who once cleansed our souls will continue to enlighten and comfort them. The Church, still teaching us by outward signs, or emblems, here represents the Holy Spirit under the emblem of Light, to teach us that He is to our souls what light is to our bodily senses. As we could not perform our daily tasks without the light of day, so neither can we work out our salvation without the assistance of GOD's Holy Spirit; and as light guides and cheers those who walk in its beams, while it is of no use to those who wilfully shut their eyes against it; so the Holy Spirit is the Guide and Comforter of all who seek His influence and follow it, while He withdraws Himself from such as wilfully harden their hearts against Him. Thus Solomon says, "The light of the righteous rejoiceth, but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out," (Prov. xiii. 9;) and again, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day," (Prov. iv. 18;) therefore have we great need to pray, that this heavenly light may give us such a right judgment in all things, that, knowing our

duty, and having strength to walk in it, we may evermore go on our way rejoicing in His holy comfort.¹ As visible objects are thus sometimes used as emblems or representations of spiritual things, so the institutions of the law of Moses are also used as types or foreshadowings of the higher truths of the Gospel. Thus, the institution of the Jewish feast of Pentecost is chosen as the subject for this morning's Lesson, because it is a type of the Christian festival of Whitsunday. On the feast of Pentecost, which was observed fifty days after the Passover,² the Jews commemorated the giving of the law in the midst of terrors on Mount Sinai; and also gave thanks for the ingathering of the wheat harvest; on the festival of Whitsunday we commemorate the descent of the law of love to which the law of terror has given place, and we also give thanks for the gathering-in of souls into the Christian Church through the labours of the inspired Apostles.

The accomplishment of this great event, which had been typified or represented in the First Lesson, is recorded in the portion of Scripture appointed for the Epistle, where the descent of the Holy Spirit, together with the circumstances under which He manifested Himself, are distinctly related. From them we may learn something of the nature of the Holy Spirit's dealings, both with the Apostles as well as with mankind in general. By descending upon them while they were assembled to keep the feast of Pentecost,³ we learn that He communicates Himself more especially to those who humbly and obediently seek Him in His ordinances. "The rushing mighty wind,"⁴ by which

¹ See Collect.

² First Morning Lesson, verse 9.

³ Epistle, verse 1;

⁴ verse 2.

He first indicated His presence, was to represent the speedy and unexpected success with which He would crown the Apostles' labours, and was also an emblem of the operations of the Holy Ghost, which are unseen, and are perceptible only by their effects. The cloven, or divided tongues,¹ signified the diversity of languages which they were enabled to speak in order to publish the gospel ; while the form of fire under which these tongues appeared, well represents the nature of that Gospel and Him Who inspired it, administering comfort, or threatening destruction, according as we use or abuse it.

Our Saviour Himself gives us in the Gospel the simple rule whereby we may know if we are of the number of those to whom the Holy Spirit will bring peace and comfort. He there declares that if we are of "the world,"² that is, if we have no disposition to know Him or to be governed by Him, we can have no part in the gifts of the Blessed Comforter,—but if we love Him, and show our love by our obedience,³ He will so unite us to Himself by His Blessed Spirit dwelling in us, that being made one with Him and He one with us, we shall enjoy His presence and favour here, and by the same Spirit be raised up with Him hereafter.

The 48th Psalm describes the glories of the earthly Jerusalem where GOD of old manifested His especial presence ; and speaks of the happiness and safety of those whose privilege it was to worship within its sacred walls.⁴ Under these figures are represented the glories of the Christian Church where GOD now dwells by His Spirit, and the comfort and protection He affords to

¹ Epistle, verse 3.

² verses 21, 23.

³ Gospel, verse 17 ;

⁴ Psalm xlviii. 2, 8, 10-13.

those whose privilege it is to join in her holy ordinances.

The 68th Psalm was sung by the Israelites, when at the removal of the ark to Mount Zion, they praised GOD for having delivered them from their enemies, and guided and sustained them in their journey through the wilderness. It is therefore appropriately used by us Christians, when, on this day, we thank GOD for having vanquished our spiritual enemies, and sent the gifts of His Holy Spirit to sustain us in the wilderness of this world. These gifts are, His Word and Sacraments, with which the members of His Church are strengthened and refreshed just as the "weary" Israelites were with the "gracious" rain of manna.¹

In the Psalms for the Evening, we magnify the power of GOD, Who by His Spirit made, and still continues to sustain, all the creatures that are in the world. The Holy Spirit is the "Author and Giver" of life to our souls, as well as to our bodies; therefore, while on this day we praise the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, and "speak of all His marvellous works," let us not forget to pray that He will sustain our souls as well as our bodies, and so increase in them more and more His precious gifts, that both may be preserved unto everlasting life. The prophecies in the Evening Lesson describe the work which the Holy Spirit has been carrying on in the kingdom or Church of CHRIST, ever since His first descent on the day of Pentecost. His bringing in the Gentiles into the Christian Church is represented by the taming of wild and ferocious animals.² The harmony and concord subsisting between these wild animals and others of the most different natures and habits, is an

¹ Psalm, xlviii. 9.

² First Evening Lesson, verses 6-10.

emblem of the peace and unity which should exist amongst all who have been baptized by one Spirit into one Body, (1 Cor. xii. 13;) and by the highway¹ in which "the remnant of His people" were to pass, is to be understood that safe but narrow way, in which He leads those who have taken upon themselves the Christian profession.

The alternative Evening Lesson speaks prophetically of the great gift of the Holy Spirit and His influence upon the soul,² not to exalt it, but to bring it to a sense of its own sinfulness.³ The more we know of GOD and the more we learn of holiness, the more convinced must we be of sin.

St. Paul carries on the same teaching, contrasting the life of those who live by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and that of those who wilfully neglect His guidance, and live after the flesh,⁴ that is to say, follow their desires.

The former alone are the *true* members of the Church, the latter only *outwardly* so, as the withered branch is still a member of the living tree. Only those who live after the Spirit, *i.e.* who keep their baptismal vows, can hope to reap the baptismal promises, and become heirs, with CHRIST, of heaven.⁵

In the case of the Ephesian converts, we have an example of the rite of confirmation following upon the sacrament of baptism; for we here find St. Paul, as chief pastor or bishop, laying his hands on those whom he had already baptized,⁶ to strengthen their baptismal faith, and confirm them in their Christian profession.

¹ First Evening Lesson, verse 16.

² Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 26;

⁴ Second Morning Lesson, verse 5;

⁶ Second Evening Lesson, verse 6.

³ verse 31.

⁵ verse 17.

We are taught, then, by the services of this day, not only to praise GOD for the descent of His Holy Spirit on the Church in general, but also to thank Him for having appointed sacraments and ordinances whereby He communicates Himself to each one of us her members; and we also learn to follow up the profession we made when His Holy Spirit was bestowed upon us, if we would receive the benefit then promised.

Let us, then, keep alive the grace which the Holy Spirit implanted at our baptism, by praying that He will send us more and more of His heavenly light. Let us wait on Him continually "in the midst of His temple," the Church,¹ and show ourselves true members of that Church by our love and obedience to CHRIST her Head, and by unity and concord with our fellow-members.² If we thus watch and keep that white garment (Rev. xvi. 15) which was given to us in baptism, we may humbly hope to be one day admitted among the great multitude, who, having been washed and made white in the Blood of the Lamb, worship for ever before His throne, "clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." (Rev. vii. 9.)

¹ See Psalm xlviii. 8.

² See First Evening Lesson.



Monday in Whitsun Week.

For the Epistle, Acts, x. 34. *Morning Lessons*, Genesis, xi.
1-10; 1 Corinthians, xii.

Gospel, St. John, iii. 16. *Evening Lessons*, Numbers,
xi. 16-31; 1 Corinthians, xii.
27, and xiii.

THE commemoration of the high festival of Whitsuntide is not limited to the Sunday, but is extended to the two following days, for which separate services are appointed. This being, as we have seen, one of the seasons for baptizing, in the ancient Church, this week, like that of Easter, was especially devoted to the benefit of the newly baptized members. Not only were thanks given to ALMIGHTY GOD for their conversion, but such services were selected as would be most fitted for their instruction and improvement; they are, therefore, equally applicable to us, who, though not baptized so recently, have equal cause both to thank GOD for having sent us "the light of His Holy Spirit,"¹ and to take heed that we have not received it in vain. Thus, while the Collect again implores the guidance of that heavenly light, the Gospel bids us show ourselves true children of light by our deeds as well as by our words,² and the Second Lesson for the Morning points out how every member of CHRIST has his proper work assigned him in the Church.³ To explain this more clearly, the Apostle represents the Church or Body of CHRIST, under the emblem of the body of man.

¹ Collect.

² Gospel, verse 21.

³ Second Morning Lesson, verses 7-12.

This, we know, is made up of different limbs or members, all united under one head, kept alive by one soul, and each fitted for some particular office which it is expected to perform.¹ As long as each keeps in its proper place, deriving life and energy from the soul, and obeying the wishes of the head, all goes on well, and the body is in a healthy state, but everything is thrown into confusion by the disease or inactivity of a single limb. From this we may understand that every member of the Body of CHRIST has different duties to perform which are expected of him, just as we expect the eye to see or the feet to walk. Some have higher duties and some lower,—some are called to rule and some to obey,—but every one who has been joined to the Body of CHRIST and made alive by His Spirit, may, in some way or other, prove himself a useful member of His Church, and show that the Holy Spirit is dwelling and acting in him. If he neglects his duty, and resists the motions of the Blessed Spirit, he himself becomes a diseased and useless member, and knows not how far he may bring disease and confusion into the whole Body.

In the history of the confusion of tongues² we have a striking instance of the discord and confusion brought into the world by the pride and presumption of man. It is especially brought before our notice on this day, that, by contrasting it with the miracle of the fiery tongues, to which it gave rise, we might compare the effects of the pride and sin of man with the fruits of the Holy Spirit;—by the one, mankind was divided, while the effect of the other was to restore peace and unity to the world. As a means of keeping up this blessed

¹ Second Morning Lesson, verse 12, &c.

² First Morning Lesson.

peace and unity among mankind, the Holy Spirit confers authority upon particular persons, who are to be obeyed and respected by those over whom they are set. Thus he committed to the seventy elders the task of ruling the people of Israel,¹ and thus does He still set over us "higher powers," unto whom He commands "every soul to be subject," (Rom. xiii. 1,) and who, we are told, are ordained of God.

Such rulers as were appointed in the early Church St. Paul enumerates in the Second Evening Lesson. But to work in the Church in these ways is not the gift of all, it is only permitted to those specially ordained of the Holy Spirit for the purpose. The gift which all may have, and all must use, to the benefit of the Church is that of charity. That word includes almost all the Christian virtues, meaning, as it does, love of GOD and man. When hope is completed in the realization of heaven, when faith is perfected in sight, charity will yet reign in the kingdom of GOD, binding saints to angels, and all to GOD in the ties of universal love. There would be much less distraction and division in the Church if we would but follow the apostolic injunction and covet earnestly this best gift. We have but to read over carefully this chapter to see how dreadfully lacking we are in this Christian virtue, this alone will suffice to make us feel the *necessity* of a power higher than our own to conquer the evil self which is ever in opposition to the first principles of charity. None are too young or unlearned to perform this service in the Church of CHRIST, or to hope that even their endeavours may be of some avail towards setting forth the glory of GOD, and setting forward the salvation of all men.

¹ See First Evening Lesson.

Thus does the Church at this season teach us that every member of CHRIST who has been cleansed by His Blood and quickened by His Spirit, must "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called," "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. iv. 1, 3.)



Tuesday in Whitsun Week.

*For the Epistle, Acts, viii. 14. Morning Lessons, Joel, ii. 21 ;
1 Thessalonians, v. 12-24.
Gospel, St. John, x. 1. Evening Lessons, Micah, iv.
1-8 ; 1 St. John, iv. 1-14.*

THE services for the Tuesday of this week carry out the lessons taught us on the preceding days ; leading us first to the means through which we must seek the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and then teaching us what is expected of those who receive them.

In the portion of Scripture appointed for the Epistle, the holy sacrament of baptism,¹ and the sacred rite of confirmation,² are again brought forward as the means of conveying to our souls that heavenly light for which the Collect prays. This being one of the Ember weeks, we find that the Gospel points out the difference between those who have our LORD's commission for dispensing these holy ordinances, and such as presumptuously take upon themselves the sacred office. The former may be compared to good shepherds, to whom their Master has committed the care of His sheep, with power to admit men into His fold, and means to

¹ Epistle, verse 16 ;

² verse 17.

provide for those who remain in it ; the latter are like thieves and robbers,¹ by whom the sheep are deceived and led astray. Let us, then, who have had the privilege of being "received into the congregation of CHRIST's flock," (Baptismal Service,) submit ourselves to the pastors whom He has set over it by His apostolic commission, and not follow those who have climbed up some other way. The prophecy of Joel, appointed for the first Lesson this morning, contains a direct intimation of the pouring out of the Spirit upon the Church, especially upon her ministry.² This prophecy was claimed by St. Peter in the first Gospel sermon to apply to the Pentecostal gift, whereby the Apostles, hitherto in doubt and uncertainty, were inspired not only to preach aright CHRIST crucified, but to administer His Sacraments and organize the body of His Church. (Acts ii. 16, &c.)

While, therefore, we thankfully acknowledge that He can bestow the gifts of His Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of men, however unworthy, we should devoutly employ this season in praying that CHRIST's ministers "may be replenished with the truth of His doctrine, and endowed with innocency of life," (Collect for Ember week,) that so by their lives, as well as by their doctrine, they may set forward His glory and our salvation.

The Church, having led us to seek for the gifts of the Holy Spirit through the appointed means, now teaches us to show forth its effects in our lives. For this purpose she calls upon us, as Micah called upon the repentant Israelites, "to walk in the name of the LORD our GOD for ever."³ She ex-

¹ Gospel, verse 1.

² First Morning Lesson, verse 28.

³ First Evening Lesson, verse 5.

horts us not to "quench"¹ or resist the Holy Spirit, but to keep It alive by constant prayer; and in conclusion she lays down the different marks by which we may know whether we are indeed living under His holy influence. If, then, we have a lively faith in the merits of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who died for us that we might "live through Him;"² if we obediently "hear" those who are sent to us of GOD;³ if we are striving to overcome the world,⁴ and to love one another as He hath loved us,⁵ we are allowed to hope that GOD is really dwelling in us by His Spirit, and will preserve our whole spirit, soul, and body, unto the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.⁶



The Ember Days.

THE Ember days, which are the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday preceding the Sundays on which the clergy are ordained, are set apart by the Church, to implore, by prayer and fasting, the blessing of GOD upon all those who are about to be admitted to the sacred office. The word "ember," which signifies rotation or course, is applied to them, because the Sundays for ordination, and consequently the Ember days which precede them, return in regular rotation with the four seasons of the year.

In order that we may better understand the necessity and duty of observing these fasts, we must

¹ Second Morning Lesson, verse 19.

² Second Evening Lesson, verse 9 ;

³ see verse 6 ; ⁴ verses 4, 5 ;

⁵ Second Morning Lesson, verse 23.

⁶ verse 11.

consider the great privileges and blessings we receive from a divinely ordained ministry.

It was the will of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that the salvation which He came into the world to purchase, should, after His Ascension, be communicated to mankind, by means of outward and visible ordinances. These outward and visible ordinances, which we call Sacraments, He has promised to accompany with His blessing to all worthy receivers, provided they are administered in the manner He has commanded, and by the persons whom He has appointed. That such persons might never be wanting so long as the world continued, He selected a body of men whom He named Apostles, to whom He not only gave authority to preach the Gospel, and administer the sacraments, but also to hand on to others the power they had received from Himself. Those to whom the Apostles handed on this power transferred their authority to others also, who in the same way again ordained others, and so the commission has come down to our present bishops, who have thus obtained their authority from our Blessed Saviour Himself. That they had this power of transferring to others the authority they themselves had received, we know from the words, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," (St. Matthew, xxviii. 20,) which our LORD added to His apostolic commission; for as the persons to whom he addressed this promise all died after the lapse of some years, we see very clearly that it applied not to them only, but to their successors in the same office, and consequently to all who can prove that they have received their commission in regular succession from apostolic times. This being proved by the bishops of the English Church, we are

quite sure that they, with the priests and deacons, whom they ordain to serve under them, are really the persons appointed by our LORD to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments, and that when we receive them at their hands, our LORD will make good His promise, by accompanying the outward sign with that inward and spiritual grace which it is intended to represent and convey.

Thus it is through the means of a divinely ordained ministry, that we are made the children of GOD in Holy Baptism, that our souls are strengthened and refreshed by the Body and Blood of CHRIST in the Holy Communion, and that we have a body of men to guide and instruct us, whose teaching the Holy Spirit will ever be at hand to bless. Such being, then, the great benefits we receive from the apostolic ministry, let us devoutly observe these seasons by praying for its continuance amongst ourselves, as well as for its extension to others. By thus keeping the Ember days, each individual Christian may be the humble instrument of advancing CHRIST's Church upon earth, and will, therefore, be obeying the command of Him Who has taught us daily to pray "Thy kingdom come."

To help us in our devotions at these seasons, the Church has provided two Collects, one of which is to be used every day during the Ember week. In the first of these we pray for the Church in general, for the bishops by whom it is governed, and for those whom the bishops shall select to serve in it; but, as if to remind us that the Church and her ministers are only the instruments by which our salvation is applied, and not the cause of it, the opening of the prayer teaches us that the Church,

and consequently the salvation and blessings which she conveys, have been purchased for us entirely by the Blood of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. The petition that the bishops may lay hands suddenly on no man, means that they may not be led to confer the grace of ordination, after the manner of the Apostles,¹ by the laying on of hands, without due and earnest examination into the fitness of the person seeking that holy rite.

The second Collect is entirely devoted to praying for the ministers about to be ordained ; and makes mention of the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, which have constituted the body of the clergy ever since the time of the Apostles. By the conclusion of both prayers we learn the end and object both of our petitions and their ministrations, namely, the glory of GOD, the benefit of His Church, and the salvation of mankind.

Besides these two prayers, the Church gives us additional matter for our devotion and meditation during the Ember weeks, by providing that some part of the service for the Sundays which usually precede or follow them, should bear on the subject : thus, on the third Sunday in Advent, we pray for the "ministers and stewards of GOD's mysteries ;" the Epistle for the first Sunday in Lent, by setting before us the trials and labours of the Apostle St. Paul, is designed to stir us up to greater earnestness in interceding for those, who now hold his office, and consequently partake of his labours ;² while the retirement of our LORD into the wilderness, previous to entering on His ministry, (related in the Gospel for the same day,) sets us an example of

¹ Acts, vi. 6 ; 1 Timothy, iv. 14 ; 1 Timothy, v. 22.

² Epistle for the First Sunday in Lent, verse 4, &c.

fasting and prayer. The miraculous descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, which we commemorate at Whitsuntide, is an encouragement to believe that the same Holy Spirit will now send down upon their successors the "continual dew of His blessing." On the fifteenth and sixteenth Sundays after Trinity, which usually fall about the period of the autumnal Ember week, the Collects are likewise devoted to praying for the Church.

Having now seen the duty and privilege of observing the Ember seasons, and considered the prayers and portions of Scripture selected to help us in our observance of them, let us examine what Scripture warrant the Church has for commanding that the ordination of her ministers should be preceded by fasting and prayer. First, we have the precept and example of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who, previously to the appointment of His twelve Apostles, not only desired His followers to pray that "the LORD of the harvest would send forth labourers into His harvest," (St. Matthew, ix. 38,) but Himself "continued all night in prayer to GOD." (Luke, vi. 12.) The eleven Apostles had recourse to prayer before the election of St. Matthias; (Acts, i. 24;) at the ordination of the seven deacons, the Apostles are said to have "prayed" before they laid their hands on them; (Acts, vi. 6;) and Barnabas and Paul were not "sent away" to their work, till the Apostles had first "fasted and prayed" and laid their hands on them. (Acts, xiii. 3.) What success attended these prayers we know by the subsequent account of the conversions effected by these first preachers of the Gospel; and though, in later ages of the Church, the same miraculous manifestations of Divine power have

not followed her petitions, yet every sincere member of CHRIST'S Church who devoutly observes these seasons, may find in such examples an encouragement to hope that He, Who then poured down miraculous gifts upon His Apostles, will now, in answer to our prayers, "make all bishops and pastors diligently to preach His holy word, and the people obediently to follow the same, that they may receive the crown of everlasting glory." (Collect for St. Peter's day.)



Trinity Sunday.

<i>For the Epistle,</i> Revelations, iv. 1. <i>Gospel,</i> St. John, iii. 1.	<i>Morning Lessons,</i> Isaiah, vi. 1-11 ; Revelations, i. 1-9. <i>Evening Lessons,</i> Genesis, xviii. or i. and ii. to verse 4 ; Ephesians, iv. 1-17, or St. Matthew, iii.
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N the preceding great festivals we have celebrated the praises of each of the Three distinct Persons of the Blessed Godhead. We have adored the goodness of GOD the Son in being made man, dying and rising again for us ; that of GOD the Holy Ghost in sanctifying us ; and that of GOD the Father in both sending the Son and pouring down the Holy Spirit. This day the Church calls upon us to worship these Three Persons as One GOD, and thus concludes her round of festivals by setting before us the great doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, the Three in One.

That we must worship Three Persons, and yet acknowledge but One GOD, is a mystery which we

cannot understand ; we must not even try to understand beyond what GOD has revealed concerning it ; but we must firmly believe it, and endeavour to strengthen our faith by prayer, and the study of GOD's holy word. This is what the Church directs us to do this day ; for, after having prayed in the Collect that GOD would "keep us steadfast in this faith," she selects for our meditation the several portions of Holy Scripture, both out of the Old and New Testaments, where this doctrine is clearly taught.

The first chapter in the Bible,¹ read as the alternative Lesson for the morning, is one of those from which we learn the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Holy Scripture here represents One LORD GOD Almighty as creating heaven and earth ;² yet He, Whom we believe to be One only GOD, speaks in the plural number, saying "Let *Us* make man in Our Image,"³ and carries on the work of creation by means of Three distinct Persons, namely, He Who spake the word ; the Word by Whom all things were made ; and the Spirit Who moved upon the face of the waters.⁴ Again, the appearance of the Almighty to Abraham, recorded in the first Evening Lesson, is a lively representation of the Holy Trinity, for here, Three Divine Persons were distinctly seen by Abraham,⁵ yet we find Abraham addressing himself to One LORD.⁶

In the vision of Isaiah, recorded in the first Morning Lesson, the same doctrine is taught ; the prophet is brought into the presence of "the King, the LORD of Hosts,"⁷ and hears the adoring

¹ First Alt. Evening Lesson ; ² verse 1 ; ³ verse 26 ;

⁴ verse 2.

⁵ First Evening Lesson, verse 2 ;

⁶ verse 3.

⁷ First Morning Lesson, verse 5.

cries of the heavenly host uttering the Holy, Holy, Holy¹ which tells of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, while the Seraphim bending before the throne are furnished with three pairs of wings,² emblematical of the threefold nature of the Deity they adore.

Thus is the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity clearly taught even in the Old Testament ; but it is still more fully revealed in the New, especially in those passages which the Church brings forward this day.

The first of these is the Baptism of our Blessed LORD, where the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity are brought distinctly before our view. The Son is baptized, the Holy Ghost descends upon Him,³ and the Father's voice is heard from heaven.⁴ No less clearly does our Saviour's conversation with Nicodemus in the Gospel bear testimony to the truth we are considering ; for here also the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are distinctly mentioned. GOD the Father is said to be present with GOD the Son in performing those miracles which proved His divine authority.⁵ GOD the Son was conversing with Nicodemus on earth at the same moment that He declares Himself to be in heaven, and GOD⁶ the Holy Ghost is mentioned as the Divine Spirit, from Whom the waters of baptism derive their efficacy.⁷

But, while we thus acknowledge Three Persons in the Holy Trinity, the Second Lesson for the evening carries us back to the belief that these Three are One ; worshipped in heaven as "One

¹ First Morning Lesson, verse 3 ; ² verse 2.

³ Second Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 16 ;

⁴ verse 17.

⁵ Gospel, verse 2 ;

⁶ verse 3 ;

⁷ verse 5.

GOD, and Father of all,"¹ and uniting on earth in the work of our salvation. The One LORD² dying for our redemption, the One Spirit³ uniting us all in one body to receive the benefits of the Cross, the One Father permitting us to address Him as His children, and offering to us heaven as our home. Into that home a glimpse was vouchsafed to the "beloved disciple,"⁴ and the warnings and messages from thence he delivers as sent from One Who is the Alpha and the Omega,⁵ and yet he cites as His authorities the Spirit,⁶ the First Begotten,⁷ and the Father.⁸

These wondrous mysteries can never be understood by us until that day when all things shall be made known, but perhaps it may not be irreverent to follow out the analogy of the Nicene Creed, and compare the Divine Trinity to one of the wonders of His creation, the sun. That great body may be said to be the parent of the light which it sends forth, the light may be said to be the generator of heat, yet neither light nor heat can be separated from the parent body, without which they would not exist, and the parent body cannot be separated from light and heat which came into existence with it. Each is separate yet all are one. So the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct Persons, are One; only One without creation, One from all eternity to all eternity.

Having now been taught from the Word of GOD the important fact that "the Father is GOD, the Son is GOD, and the Holy Ghost is GOD, and yet they are not Three Gods but One GOD," (see Athanasian Creed,) the Scripture for the Epistle shows us

¹ Second Evening Lesson, verse 6;

³ verse 4.

⁴ Second Morning Lesson.

⁶ verse 4;

⁷ verse 5;

² verse 5;

⁵ verse 8;

⁸ verse 6.

how the Angels in heaven receive this glorious truth ; inviting us to copy their example.¹ Instead, then, of trying to understand what GOD has not thought fit to explain, let us, like them, humbly fall down and worship, acknowledging that He Who is three times "Holy"² is but One LORD. Let us try to do His holy Will on earth as they do it in heaven, and we shall, according to our Saviour's promise, "know of the doctrine" (St. John, vii. 17) ; for amidst all our trials and infirmities we shall readily find comfort in recollecting that the Almighty is our Father, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier, as well as our GOD.

¹ Epistle, verses 8-11 ;

² verse 8.



Trinity.



THE first half of the Church's year teaches us the Creed. From the latter half we learn to keep the Commandments. During the time between Advent and Trinity Sunday, we have been learning how our Blessed Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST has perfected our redemption, to purify us unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; now, we are to be taught more particularly what those good works are which He expects of us Christians as His peculiar people, and how we are to walk in them. For this reason it is that the dealings of GOD with His chosen people of old are read to us in the Proper Lessons, as being especially applicable and instructive to those whom He has redeemed from the slavery of sin, and whom He is now leading on to that heavenly Canaan, of which the earthly was but a type. In the Gospels, the life and teaching of our Blessed LORD are brought before us, as being the most perfect pattern we can strive to imitate, as well as the best instruction that can be provided for us; and those portions of the Epistles are selected which abound in precepts of holy living. The Church has so arranged these services, that though her members have now no particular object upon which to fix their thoughts, yet every Sunday may

still bring with it some practical lesson which even the youngest of them may understand and act upon ; and thus does she provide, that those who “dwell in her courts” may be led on “from strength to strength unto the presence of the GOD of gods in heaven.”



First Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, 1 St. John, iv. 7.

Morning Lesson, Joshua, iii.
7 to iv. 15.

Gospel, St. Luke, xvi. 19.

Evening Lesson, Joshua v.
13 to vi. 21, or xxiv.



O keep the commandments of GOD is a work entirely above our own strength ; this season opens, therefore, with a prayer to ALMIGHTY GOD, that He would have compassion upon our weakness and send us the grace necessary to assist us in this great work.

Having prayed for divine strength, the Epistle proceeds to instruct us in the first and great commandment, which is love :¹ love to GOD, and to our neighbour for His sake. The motive by which St. John urges Christians to this duty seems especially suited to us, who have, during the past season, duly commemorated the wonderful love of GOD in our redemption and sanctification. We have “seen and do testify”² that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, and we have been outwardly professing thankfulness to our GOD, for “sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins ;”³ now we are called upon to

¹ Epistle, verse 12 ; ² verse 14 ; ³ verse 10.

show our gratitude to Him Who "has so loved us," by loving "one another."¹ The terrible consequences of neglecting this divine command are awfully brought before us in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, which is chosen as the Gospel for the day. The rich man in the parable was punished, not because he was rich, but because he loved and indulged himself, instead of loving and succouring his neighbour.² His example is, therefore, a warning to all, whether rich or poor, young or old, who live only for themselves, without caring for, or forwarding, the welfare of others. It serves also to teach us that self is the great enemy we have to conquer, and the subduing our own unruly wills and affections the great work we have to do, before we can enter that promised land to which our Saviour is leading us. When the Israelites crossed the Jordan aided by the miraculous interposition of God,³ though they penetrated into the land of Canaan with the certain promise of eventual peace, yet they immediately encountered war.⁴ So we, entering into the Church of CHRIST through the waters of baptism, with the certain promise of peace and heaven, immediately encounter war. The very words of the baptismal service prepare us for it, and we are "signed with the sign of the cross," in token that we shall not be ashamed to *fight* under CHRIST's banner. And the first stronghold that resists our progress in the land of grace is the citadel of *self*; just as Jericho, with its high walls and strong defenders, stood in the way of the triumphant Israelites. We have, however, the strength and power to overthrow it. As "the Captain of the LORD's

¹ Epistle, verse 11.

² Morning Lesson.

³ Gospel, verses 20, 21.

⁴ Evening Lesson.

host"¹ appeared to Joshua to assure him of His assistance ; so does our Saviour promise His presence and the guidance of His Holy Spirit to the members of His Church in their spiritual warfare. The walls of Jericho fell flat before the children of Israel, not by their own prowess, but before their obedient performance of a simple act.² So will the strongholds of sin and the citadels of self fall before the children of CHRIST who obediently keep His commandment and obey His ordinances. Much spoil was the reward of *their* victory, much peace of mind here, and the assurance of perfect peace hereafter, is the reward of those Christians who "by the help of GOD's grace keep His commandments, and please Him both in will and deed."³ The alternative Evening Lesson gives us the instructions which Joshua was inspired to deliver to the conquering Israelites before his death. Pointing out to them the wondrous mercies of GOD, he exhorts them to gratitude and to a remembrance of the strength, through which alone their victories were attained. GOD's mercies to us are still more plain. Looking back on our past lives, and looking forward to the future, we must indeed exclaim that in our *own* strength, we have done, we can do, nothing. May He grant us gratitude as well as strength, and enable us with truth and earnestness to declare "the LORD our GOD will we serve, and His voice will we obey."⁴

¹ Evening Lesson, chapter v. verse 14 ;

² chapter vi. verses 3-20.

⁴ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 24.

³ Collect.



Second Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, 1 St. John, iii. 13.
Gospel, St. Luke, xiv. 16.

Morning Lesson, Judges, iv.
Evening Lesson, Judges, v.
or vi. 11.

LAST Sunday we were taught that GOD is our only strength, obedience to Him our only hope ; to lead us onward still further in this holy duty, the services of this day consider the ALMIGHTY both as a merciful Father Who offers us His guidance,¹ and as a gracious Sovereign Who invites us into His kingdom,² if only we will love Him as our Father, and obey Him as our King. The language of the Collect will teach us in what this love of GOD consists, and how we may best show it. Christians are here represented as being "brought up" by their heavenly Father, just as children are trained by the hand of an earthly parent ; consequently, the love which we Christians bear to GOD, should be like that which a dutiful child feels for an affectionate father. It must not be an occasional feeling ; but one which increases day by day, growing stronger and stronger, in proportion as our Father draws us nearer to Himself, and teaches us more of His ways ; equally trusting to His good Providence, whether He sees fit to lead us on by blessings or by punishments. From the latter part of the Collect we learn that as children grow to a full age under the care of earthly parents, so Christians who thus follow the guidance of their Heavenly Father, will grow up in His "steadfast fear and love : " from loving GOD

¹ Collect.

² Gospel.

as their Father, it will naturally follow that they will love their fellow Christians as their brethren, and thus will they be trained into the daily exercise of that Christian charity, which is described in the Epistle as the distinguishing character of those who "have passed from death unto life."¹ Now all who in baptism have been "raised from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness," have been made partakers of "the new life" here spoken of; therefore it is to all Christians, of every age and place, that St. John speaks, when he exhorts them to show the power of the new life that is in them by their love to their brethren. By this Scripture let us examine and try ourselves. If we are cultivating the holy temper of Christian love here described, we may hope that the spiritual life given to us at our baptism is living and growing in us, and that GOD Who then adopted us for His children is bringing us up in His steadfast fear and love; but if we find any uncharitable thoughts taking root in our minds, or are conscious of envious feelings springing up in our hearts, then let us be very watchful, and pray that we may not, by our uncharitableness, grieve GOD's Holy Spirit, and thus provoke Him to leave us to ourselves.

Having seen, in the first part of this day's service, how GOD adopts us into His family, and brings us up as His children, the Gospel goes on to show how He also invites us into His kingdom. The "Supper"² here spoken of (and which is more minutely described and detailed in the parallel passage of St. Matthew's Gospel under the name of the Marriage Feast,—St. Matthew, xxii. 2, &c.) represents the Kingdom or Church of CHRIST into which we Gentiles are now invited in

¹ Epistle, verse 14.

² Gospel, verse 16.

the place of the Jews, who have slighted and refused the call. The messengers sent into the highways¹ and hedges to call in strangers to the feast, are the Apostles and their successors, who have received CHRIST's commission to gather members into His Church, and who will continue to hold this commission even unto the end of the world. The good things provided at the Supper² represent the privileges offered to all who have been made members of CHRIST's Church on earth, and inheritors of His kingdom in heaven; the King Who provides them is the LORD Himself; the oxen and fatlings which had been killed represent the sacrifice of CHRIST's precious death, signified to the Jews by the blood of bulls and goats; and applied to Christians now by the commemorative sacrifice of CHRIST's most blessed Body and Blood in the Holy Sacrament of the LORD's Supper. To these precious privileges GOD has invited us all. He admitted us to them at our baptism; by His Word and ministers He continually urges us to profit by them. During the past season especially, He has set before us, one by one, the several benefits purchased for us by CHRIST's redemption; and now He calls upon us by the voice of His Church to live as dutiful subjects, giving up ourselves obediently to follow His holy will and commandments. Worldly objects will, however, be continually tempting us to refuse this gracious call. Each of us, according to his age or station, has some pursuit or pleasure, which may take up too much of his thoughts and prevent him from giving up his heart to GOD. Like the excuses given by the guests in the parable,³ the

¹ Gospel, verse 23; compare St. Matthew, xxii. 9:

² verse 24; compare St. Matthew, xxii. 4.

³ verse 18, &c.; St. Matthew, xxii. 5, &c.

pursuit or pleasure which we plead as a hindrance may be innocent in itself; but if it occupies the place of GOD in our hearts, by drawing us away when we might be attending His house and ordinances, or if it take up our thoughts when there, it is like the farm or the merchandize which excluded the invited guests from the royal supper; it excludes us from the privileges of CHRIST'S Church on earth, and may, if not given up, exclude us from the blessings of His kingdom in heaven. Rather let us, as obedient children and dutiful subjects of our Heavenly Father and King, regulate even our worldly calling by the love and fear of God; and while we gladly relinquish any work when it may interfere with His service, let us, by our diligence at other times, show that even our daily occupation may be done to the glory of GOD.

While, however, we thus devote ourselves to the service of our Heavenly King, we shall, like the chosen people of Israel, be continually surrounded by enemies who would turn us out of the right way. In this, our spiritual warfare, we must, after the manner of the Israelites in the Morning Lesson, "cry unto the LORD" for help;¹ we must imitate Barak by going out manfully to fight against our temptations, taking for our guides those whom God has appointed² to be our pastors and teachers. Like Gideon, if we do but call upon the LORD we need not fear, but go forth courageously to our spiritual warfare, strong in GOD'S strength.³

As the hosts of Midian fell before the prowess of the humble man of an humble tribe,⁴ so will the hosts of Satan flee before the weakest of GOD'S children, if he will but fight with "the sword of

Morning Lesson, verse 3.

1st. Evening Lesson, verse 14;

² verse 8.

⁴ verse 15.

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the LORD,"¹ the grace of the Holy Spirit. Let us not forget, however, the lesson again taught us to-day. Not to Deborah or Barak or Gideon was due the salvation of Israel. Not to ourselves, our repentance, our faith, our fighting, is due our victory or our salvation, but to GOD alone, who helps the struggler, pardons the penitent, rewards the faithful.

So like Deborah and Barak² let us not be backward to show forth our thanksgiving with our lips, by acts of adoration and of praise, and in our lives, by a devotion of ourselves to the service of CHRIST.



Third Sunday after Trinity.

<i>Epistle</i> , 1 St. Peter, v. 5.	<i>Morning Lesson</i> , 1 Samuel, ii. 1-27.
<i>Gospel</i> , St. Luke, xv. 1.	<i>Evening Lesson</i> , 1 Samuel, iii. or iv. 1-19.

THE service for this day teaches us that our adoption into GOD's family and kingdom, will not procure for us freedom from troubles, but support and comfort under them; it tells us that as soldiers of CHRIST, we are subject to dangers and adversities,—but as children of GOD, we have means given to us by which to withstand them; and it shows that the first and principal of these means is prayer, accompanied by a spirit of penitence and humility.

The Collect not only provides an appropriate prayer by which we may apply to GOD for aid in

¹ Judges, vii. 18.

² Evening Lesson.

the midst of danger, but it also gives a lesson as to our manner of praying. It supposes that all GOD's children, worshipping in GOD's house, have come with "an hearty desire to pray,"¹ and upon these only it begs a blessing; therefore all who come to Church without this "hearty desire," who do not make prayer their first and chief object in GOD's house, and whose petitions, while there, are cold and formal, exclude themselves with their own lips from the benefits asked for in this Collect, and cannot expect that "mighty aid" for which it prays. But this "desire" for prayer is said to be the gift of GOD, therefore if we would obtain it, or increase in it when we have in some degree attained it, we must seek it in the way He has ordained, by penitence and humiliation. We must "keep our foot" (Eccles. v. 1) when we go to the house of GOD, and "before we pray we must prepare ourselves." (Ecclus. xviii. 23.)

Of GOD's merciful readiness to receive those who thus approach Him, the Gospel for the day affords us abundant proof; the joy of the shepherd who found his wandering sheep,² and of the woman who recovered her lost money,³ being there put forth as faint images of that joy with which every returning sinner is welcomed to the presence of GOD. Marvellous indeed it appears to us that the Ruler of the Universe should take such individual interest in His creatures; and while it affords comfort to those who, having wandered away from the care of the Great Shepherd, desire to seek Him again in the paths of holiness; it is a terrible warning to some, who fancy that amid the sinfulness of the great world their little sins may escape the notice of the Great GOD of heaven.

¹ Collect.² Gospel, verse 6;³ verse 3.

The Epistle shows us where we are to expect our greatest danger; it tells us of our great enemy the devil, who like a lion,¹ roaring after his prey, is continually seeking to destroy men's souls when they are off their guard; and it warns us that to resist his attacks, watchfulness in our lives must be added to earnestness in our prayers,—we must be “sober” and “vigilant”¹ as well as prayerful. Sobriety here means, not only a moderate and thankful use of GOD's creatures, but a continual mortification of our own passions and desires, until we bring our will into subjection to GOD's will; and to be “vigilant” signifies that we take continual care not to be surprised by sloth, neglect, or the infirmities of our nature. Having done all this, we must still, as we are told, “cast all our care upon GOD,” trusting in great humility, that “His mighty aid” for which we have prayed, will establish, strengthen, and settle us.

The Lessons, especially the song of Hannah² in that for the morning, speak to us of the comfort and support which GOD affords to His servants, who are leading a life of watchfulness and prayer; while from the history of Eli and his sons we learn the terrible anger of GOD against abused responsibility or neglected privileges. The humble submission of Eli to the chastisements³ of GOD was acceptable in the sight of our merciful Father, Who is ever ready to accept the offering of an humble and contrite heart, though for the good of His erring child He may refuse to avert punishment in this life. But the sinner *may* harden his heart, as did the wicked sons of Eli, and, refusing to turn to the LORD, he may be cut off in the midst of his

¹ Epistle, verse 8.

² Morning Lesson.

³ Evening Lesson, verse 18.

wickedness with no time for the repentance he has neglected.¹

How much more safe is the condition of those, who, like the infant Samuel,² delight to dwell in GOD's house, engaged in His service, and watching for His gracious call.³ Though GOD may not reveal Himself to them in the same manner that He did to Samuel, He yet speaks to them by His ministers, in His ordinances, and through the dealings of His providence.

Let us, therefore, watch and listen to His warning voice, and let us value and improve the privilege as did Samuel. Instead of being puffed up by spiritual advantages, let us, like him, quietly go about our daily business⁴ in a spirit of humble fear and obedience, and like him, we shall grow in GOD's grace and favour. The adversary may tempt, and even try to destroy us; but "the LORD will keep the feet of His saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness, for by strength shall no man prevail."⁵

¹ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 11.

² Morning Lesson, verse 18.

³ Evening Lesson, verse 4;

⁵ Morning Lesson, verse 9.

⁴ verse 15.



Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, Romans, viii. 18.*Morning Lesson*, 1 Samuel,
xii.*Gospel*, St. Luke, vi. 36.*Evening Lesson*, 1 Samuel,
xiii. or Ruth, i.

HITHERTO the Church has been dwelling on the dangers and adversities which GOD's people are to expect in this life ; to-day she encourages and cheers them with the hope of the rest which remaineth for them when they have passed through the waves of this troublesome world. On this blessed state, then, the Epistle fixes our thoughts, giving us some faint idea of its happiness, and showing upon what grounds we may hope to attain to it. In the first verse of this passage, St. Paul assures us that the glory of this future state is such, that it will more than make amends for the sharpest earthly sufferings;¹ then he goes on to show that if a faint and uncertain hope of immortality has ever been the expectation of "the creature,"² and of "the whole creation," (that is, of mankind in general,) how much more may we, the sons of GOD, rejoice in the "sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection!" Even here we have "in us" the beginnings of that glory which shall hereafter be "revealed."³ We have been taken from "the bondage of corruption" and translated into the glorious liberty of the children of GOD ; the "first-fruits of the Spirit" have been bestowed upon us, and we may therefore wait for "the

¹ Epistle, verse 18 ;² verse 21 ;³ verse 18.

redemption of our body,"¹ knowing that, "if the Spirit of Him that raised up JESUS from the dead dwells in us, He that raised up CHRIST from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in us."²

But while the Epistle for this day thus holds out to us the blessed hope of everlasting life, the remainder of the services would remind us that "whoso hath this hope in him, must purify himself, even as He is pure;" walking through things temporal, only as a passage to things eternal. The Gospel describes the temper of mind which must be cultivated on earth, as a preparation for a happy eternity. It tells us of the love and charity and concord which we must exercise here, if we would hope to join that blessed company, whose delight it is to sing "peace on earth, and good-will to man." It teaches us that as our Father Which is in heaven is merciful, so they who hope to dwell with Him must take His universal goodness for their guide and pattern;³ and lastly, it leads us to self-examination as an important step towards the exercise of this Christian temper, for he that is conscious of his own continual failings, will never be hard upon the faults of his brethren; if we are aware of the beam that is within our own eye, we shall never be hasty in pointing out the mote that is in our brother's eye. This heavenly temper is, however, far beyond mortal strength, and will only be attained by those who, according to the spirit of this day's Collect, walk through things temporal under the guidance and protection of ALMIGHTY GOD.

To such a spirit of trust and submission as is

¹ Epistle, verse 23.
Gospel, verse 36.

² Romans, viii. 11.

expressed in this prayer, the preceding Collects for this season have been gradually leading us. In them, we have acknowledged ourselves GOD's children and servants ;¹ we have declared Him to be our defence, and implored His mighty aid.² If we have been living up to these professions, and really using these high privileges, we shall by experience have found Him to be the "protector of all that trust in Him ;"³ we shall confess that any advance in holiness that we have made, or any small degree of strength we may have gained, has been entirely His work ; and encouraged by the sense of past mercies, we shall pray that He Who has begun a good work in us, will continue it even unto the end, "increasing and multiplying upon us His mercy" according to our need.

Where GOD's grace is not thus continually sought, and His guidance continually followed, the best beginnings will fail, and the strongest resolutions come to nought. Of this we have a striking example in each of the Proper Lessons of the day. We read in the morning, that GOD's chosen people, whom He had redeemed out of Egypt, nourished in the wilderness, and defended on every side, fell into the grievous sin of distrusting His Divine protection, and asking for a king ;⁴ and in the evening, we see how Saul, by relying on his own judgment, instead of implicitly following GOD's command, was led to commit the act of disobedience which cost him his kingdom.⁵ Let us profit by their fall, and take to ourselves the instruction which the Church conveys to us this day.

¹ Second Sunday after Trinity.

² Third Sunday after Trinity.

³ Morning Lesson, verse 19.

⁴ Evening Lesson, verses 11, 14.

⁵ Collect

She addresses us as GOD's redeemed people, and tells us of the certain rest and inheritance which is laid up for us ; but she bids us take heed to our ways, lest "a promise being left us of entering into that rest, any of us should seem to come short of it."

The Alternative Evening Lesson gives us an instance both of good resolution and continued perseverance, while it sets before us a touching illustration of the manner in which we can help one another in the right way by affection and example.

Ruth determines to follow her mother-in-law on her return to the land of Israel. "Thy GOD," she exclaims, "shall be my GOD ;"¹ and the good beginning made under the influence of affection is strengthened in perseverance by the grace of GOD. She reaped her reward, being one of the few privileged to be among the earthly ancestors of the Incarnate GOD. We have a more perfect example than Ruth possessed, we are led by deeper love than that shown by Naomi to her daughter-in-law. In all things we may follow the LORD JESUS, Who desires to lead us by His love, that "He being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal."²

¹ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 16.

² Collect.



Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, 1 St. Peter, iii. 8.

Morning Lesson, 1 Samuel,
xv. 1-24.

Gospel, St. Luke, v. 1.

Evening Lesson, 1 Samuel,
xvi. or xvii.

ENTIRE and lasting happiness is only to be found (as we learned last Sunday) in the possession of "things eternal;" yet even in our passage through things temporal GOD has provided for us, if we serve Him, such a peace as the world can neither give nor take away. Where to find this peace, and how to attain it, is what we gather from the services of this day. The Collect teaches us to look to the Church of CHRIST as the place in which to hide us, the sanctuary in which we may "serve GOD in all godly quietness."¹ Into this holy sanctuary we have had the privilege of being called. GOD in His mercy has separated us from the world around to make us members of that visible Body of which CHRIST is the Head. He has gathered us into it as into a "net,"² in which He would safely lead us on to the shore of life eternal.

This is one of the thoughts suggested to us by the portion of Scripture selected as the Gospel for the day. This passage relates to us the miracle by which our LORD first intimated to His Apostles their divine calling. CHRIST, our Saviour, walking by the lake of Gennesareth, finds St. Peter and his companions engaged in their usual occu-

¹ Collect.

² Gospel, verse 5, &c.

pation of fishing.¹ Coming upon them at a moment when all their labour has been in vain, He tries their faith by urging them to repeat their unsuccessful toil.² St. Peter readily obeys His words, and finds in the miraculous draught of fishes, a prompt reward for his faith and obedience. But while the Apostles see in this miracle only a relieving of their temporal wants, our LORD leaves them not, until He has impressed upon their minds, that there is in it a higher and a deeper meaning. Thus He would lead their thoughts upwards from their temporal to their spiritual calling.³ He would show them that from henceforth the net which they are to fill is the kingdom of heaven upon earth, into which they are to gather "of every kind." (St. Matthew, xiii. 47.) The prey they are to catch is the souls of men; and the shore for which they are to make is GOD's kingdom in heaven. Faith and obedience are the means by which they must work, while on their LORD's word and His presence alone, they must depend for the success of their labours.

We who, through their means, have been received into this net, are by the mercy of GOD set forward in the way of salvation. In the midst of the storms and troubles of the world, we may there find in JESUS CHRIST our Head, an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast.

While, however, the Church of CHRIST is still militant here upon earth, it must ever be subject to many accidents and dangers from without; while it is made up "of multitudes of every kind," both bad and good, it cannot be free from discord and schism within. How much, then, its safety may be influenced by each individual member, we

¹ Gospel, verses 1, 2; ² verse 4; ³ verse 10.

learn from the remainder of the services for this day. In many ways are Christians able to aid, under GOD, the work of the Church of CHRIST into which they are called. The first and most effectual means of doing this, is prayer. He Who was willing, "for ten's sake," to have turned away His wrath from the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, even now listens to the prayer of the poorest and most destitute member of His Church, and despises not his desire. (Psalm cii. 17.) The Most High, Who ruleth in the kingdom of men, will hear the supplications of those who, in this day's Collect, pray that GOD would so order the "course of this world," as will most benefit His holy Church. Numberless examples in Scripture will prove to us how GOD's governance of the world has ever been ordered by this rule. Under the patriarchs, the Church was preserved as His chosen family. It was not allowed to suffer from the wickedness of the whole race of kings who disgraced the lines of Israel and Judah. It was preserved through the Babylonian captivity; nor was the sceptre suffered to "depart from Judah" until "Shiloh" came. (Genesis, xlix. 10.) Likewise, after the coming of CHRIST, the prayers of GOD's persecuted people were heard, and the Church was preserved in the midst of trials, persecutions, and afflictions. Let us, then, not doubt, but earnestly believe, that prayer will do as much for us as it did for them. The humblest and poorest Christian, who sincerely offers up the prayer appointed for this day, may influence, in some mysterious way, even the inscrutable decrees of GOD's providence. It may be his privilege to avert those troubles which our sins have deserved, and thus to draw down a blessing upon

that Church from which he receives such great benefits.

Again, by our actions may we advance or retard the well-being of the Church of CHRIST. Saul followed his own judgment instead of implicitly obeying the commands of GOD.¹ By this he lost the privilege of being the leader of GOD's chosen people,² and missed the opportunity of destroying the enemies of GOD. David, on the contrary, by his faith and diligence in obeying the divine commands, became the champion of GOD's glory, and the defender of His people Israel. The youth, David, the youngest of the sons of Jesse and conspicuous among his brothers for his humility, became in GOD's hands, a powerful instrument for good.³ But while we admire David's victory, we must not forget to follow David's example. The Church of CHRIST has even now spiritual enemies to contend with, as powerful as those from which David freed the Church of Israel. Goliath, the uncircumcised Philistine, is but a faint type of him, who, "as a roaring lion ever goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." Against this common foe, we, as members of CHRIST, have each one bound ourselves to fight. We must, therefore, go out against him, "in the Name of the LORD of Hosts,"⁴ Whose we are, and under Whose banner we serve. We must set ourselves severally to oppose him, in that particular point in which he most frequently attacks us; trusting as David did, not to carnal weapons, but to the leading of GOD's good providence, and the assistance of His grace. By thus resisting the devil in

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 9;

² verse 23.

³ Evening Lesson, verse 11.

⁴ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 45.

our own persons, we shall each one be doing our part towards the defence of the whole body. We shall all be helping to turn away from the Church, of which we are members, those evils which the craft and subtlety of the devil continually worketh against us. Then "when the enemy shall come in like a flood," the Spirit of the LORD, by Whom we are united and strengthened, "shall lift up a standard against him." (Isaiah, lix. 19.)

Thus it is, that by diligence in prayer, and in our Christian profession, we may promote the outward welfare of the Church of CHRIST. No less may we contribute to its peace and harmony within, by living in love and unity amongst ourselves;¹ for by this means we impart to our fellow-members some portion of that "blessing" to which we have been "called."² In our intercourse one with another, many things may happen to disturb the concord of those who call themselves brethren. Even without wrong on our part, our good may be evil spoken of, our motives misconstrued, and our actions maligned.³ In such a case, the members of CHRIST must look up for guidance to the example of their Divine Head. As the Epistle for this day directs, they must, like Him, render good for evil, blessing for railing.⁴ Then, even though the cause of the grievance be not removed, they will have peace with GOD and with themselves. They will neither be afraid nor terrified, knowing that nothing shall be suffered to "harm" those who are "followers of that which is good."⁵

We learn, then, on this day, how great even on

¹ Epistle ;

² Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 28.

³ Epistle, verse 9 ;

⁴ verse 9.

⁵ verse 13.

earth is the peace of those who love GOD's law. (Psalm cxix. 165.) The "Name of the LORD" into which they have been baptized, is indeed to them "a strong tower, into which they run, and are safe." (Proverbs, xviii. 10.) Though tossed to and fro upon the waves of this world, they may yet serve GOD quietly in the Church of CHRIST.¹



Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, Romans, vi. 3.

Gospel, St. Matthew, v. 20.

Morning Lesson, 2 Samuel, i.

Evening Lesson, 2 Samuel,
xii. 1-24, or xviii.

TO-DAY our thoughts are recalled to that state of peace and rest to which Christians look forward in the Church triumphant. Of this blessed state no words can give any idea, for it passeth man's understanding to conceive it. The nearest approach that can be made to it in this life, is that of Christians serving GOD in His Church on earth. Still, however, this is but as the shadow going before the substance, as the fore-taste of the actual enjoyment, the training by which we are here made meet to receive those "good things"¹ which are in store for us hereafter.

This lower state, then, being the preparation for that which is to follow, the contemplation of it, in which we were engaged last Sunday, will have helped us to raise our minds towards that higher existence on which we meditate to-day.

¹ Collect.

The chief happiness of heaven consists in the adoration of GOD. The hosts of the LORD praise Him (Psalm ciii. 21); His saints serve Him day and night in His temple. (Rev. vii. 15.) The heavenly beings before the throne rest not day nor night, crying "Holy, holy, holy, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY" (Rev. iv. 8); and the voice of a great multitude is continually heard shouting "Alleluia : for the LORD GOD omnipotent reigneth." (Rev. xix. 6.) If we would hope to join that blessed company and share their employment, surely we must strive even on earth to cultivate something of that temper which forms so great a part of their enjoyment in heaven. "The love of GOD"¹ must be our ruling principle, and His service our chief delight. This is what the Church would seem to teach us by praying in this day's Collect for such a love of Him, as may fit us to "obtain His promises."

But the Epistle and Gospel would lead us on still further. From them we learn how by our lives, as well as by our lips, we may show that we love GOD above all other things. In the former, St. Paul carries us back to the time of our baptism, and reminds us of our Christian obligation in that holy sacrament. It was then that we became "dead unto sin, but alive unto GOD through JESUS CHRIST."² The covering or sprinkling of our body with water was a token that our earthly lusts and affections were to be buried with CHRIST; while the rising again out of the water implied that from henceforth we "should walk in newness of life."³ From that time the love of GOD was to take, in our souls, that place which would have been otherwise usurped by the love of the world ;

¹ Collect.

² Epistle, verse 11 ;

³ verse 4.

heaven, instead of earth, was to be our home, and the good things of heaven, not those of this life, our portion. Such being the blessed state in which we were placed before we had power to choose for ourselves, it remains for us to learn how every member of CHRIST should strive to walk worthy of it.

The Gospel of the day, taken from the Sermon on the Mount, points to one necessity in the life of the Christian who would walk worthy of his high and holy calling. The passage is an amplification of that petition in the LORD's prayer, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." It teaches us that, though our evil nature may prompt us to angry passions, and incite us at times to envy, hatred,¹ and malice, yet these passions are to be restrained by regenerate man ; and the mercy and forgiveness extended to him by his Heavenly Father, are to be imitated by him in his own dealings with his fellow men.

No man can be a true lover of GOD who is a hater of men ; no man who refuses to extend mercy to others may expect mercy for himself ; but if we forgive we shall be forgiven ; and blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. It is only when we dwell in love with our brethren, that we are allowed to hope that GOD dwelleth in us, and we in GOD, for GOD Himself is Love. (1 St. John, iv. 16.) Such are some of the rules and precepts by which GOD would here train and prepare us for His presence.

The Church desires, then, in the Lessons to exemplify this teaching from the history of David, the man "after GOD's own heart."

Love of GOD was David's ruling characteristic,
Gospel, verse 22.

and in the Morning Lesson this is shown forth in his forgiveness of his enemies.

The sorrow of David for Saul,¹ and his punishment of the sin which had deprived the king of his life,² is all the more striking, when we remember the persecution he had suffered at Saul's hands, and the advantages which might have been seized by him on Saul's death. Still, in fallen man the love of GOD does not imply *sinlessness*. David committed the most grievous sin, and though, perhaps, we may in part palliate his guilt by a consideration of the customs and habits of the age in which he lived; yet he sinned, and he knew that he had sinned.

But mark the true love of God, as it shines forth again in the bitter and humiliating penitence of the King of Israel;³ his public acknowledgment of the cause of his child's death, his patient, and even cheerful, submission to his bereavement.⁴ The chastisement of that sin pursued him through life, in the rebellions and wickednesses of his family, which broke his affectionate heart, but bent his will more and more to that of GOD, Whom he loved. We leave the royal penitent with one last gleam of love shown forth now to a persecutor, a rebel, though his own son. The tenderness of David to the rebellious Absalom⁵ teaches us that gentleness and forbearance towards sinners, or those who injure us, which can only be felt by those who know their own sinfulness, and have learnt to love their Father in heaven, Who, if He chastises, is able also abundantly to pardon His children.

¹ Morning Lesson, verses 11, 12;

² Evening Lesson;

³ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 5.

⁴ verses 14, 15.

⁵ verse 20.

We cannot be sinless (the greatest saint is but a sinner pardoned) ; but we can both sorrow for sin, and learn the love of Him Who alone can grant pardon for the past, and strength for the future. Oh, LORD, "pour into our hearts *such* love toward Thee, that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire."¹



Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, Romans, vi. 19.

Morning Lesson, 1 Chronicles, xxi.

Gospel, St. Mark, viii. 1.

Evening Lesson, 1 Chronicles, xxii. or xxviii. 1-21.

THE growth of religion in the Christian is gradual. It grows up in his soul, just as life does in the stem of a plant or tree. This comparison, so often set before us in Holy Scripture, is that by which the Church instructs us on this day.

We have seen, in the services for last Sunday, that the love of GOD is the root of all holiness, the very foundation of our Christian faith. To-day we are taught the different degrees by which this principle gradually unfolds itself. We learn how, by the influence of GOD's grace, that which was once implanted into our nature is made to bring forth "fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."²

The Collect goes back to the lessons inculcated last Sunday, with regard to the love of GOD ; but impresses upon us still more forcibly, how this divine love is to take possession of us ; it makes

¹ Collect.

² Epistle, verse 22.

use of an expression borrowed from the natural world, and prays that the love of GOD may be grafted¹ in our hearts. Now we know that grafting is the strongest link that can bind any two substances together. To be properly grafted upon the old stem, the new shoot must not be simply joined to it, but so united as to become one with it,—to grow together with it, and make it partake of its character. So it is with ourselves. Having been joined to the Body of CHRIST, and baptized into His death, we have had a new life implanted in us, but we must not stop short here. To be truly advancing in this new life, the love of GOD, which is its ruling principle, must grow up in us, making all our actions partake of its character, and bringing our very nature under its influence. Those, who, by the mercy of GOD, have thus had His love “grafted” into their hearts, are brought into that state which the Epistle for this day describes. To them “old things are passed away, all things are become new.” Sin, therefore, which belonged to the old stock of their corrupt nature, must be put away; and holiness, which comes from the new shoot, must be their fruit.

Gradually, and by little and little, must each one of CHRIST’S members lay aside some sin, which would betray the still-existence of his old nature, and cultivate some virtue which is the fruit of his new birth, for this is what the Apostle means, when he desires that we who have “yielded our members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity,” should now yield them “as servants to righteousness unto holiness.”²

To enter rightly into the full force of the second petition of the Collect, we must again go to nature

¹ Collect.

² Epistle, verse 19.

for our learning. The graft, however good in itself, would, if left unwatered and untended, soon wither and die; so would it be with the love of GOD in our hearts; therefore we pray that He Who first implanted, would still continue to "increase"¹ in us true religion. Again, nourishment is necessary for the growth of a plant. Unless it be continually nourished by sap, no stem would come to maturity; so is the strengthening influence of GOD's grace necessary for the growth of religion in our souls. It is only by GOD sending down the dew of His heavenly blessing in answer to our prayers that we can hope to be "nourished with all goodness."¹ He, Who "giveth food to all flesh, and feedeth the young ravens that call upon Him," will not suffer that any of His little ones that cry unto Him should perish for lack of grace. Of this, a comforting proof is afforded us in the Gospel for the day. Here we behold CHRIST our Saviour in the midst of His people, providing for their bodily wants and infirmities.² As He did to the fainting multitude then, so does He, even now, to His people. He calls men to Him³ in the order of His holy Church, and by the hands of those whom He has commissioned to serve it, He gives to every one his portion of meat in due season—milk for babes, strong meat for those of full age.

Thus it is that, from the cradle to the grave, Christians find in the Church of CHRIST that which is necessary to nourish and support their souls. The grace of GOD given in holy baptism, is strengthened and brought out by the constant teaching of GOD's holy word. The little ones of CHRIST's flock, trained and instructed in GOD's house by GOD's own appointed minister, are

¹ Collect.² Gospel, verse 2;³ verse 6.

brought in due time to their bishop or chief pastor, that they may receive at his hands the confirmation and strengthening of these good beginnings. Then they are admitted to the higher mysteries of the Christian faith; they are allowed to feed spiritually on the precious Body and Blood of their Blessed LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. And so do the members of CHRIST grow up in grace. In prayer and Holy Communion, in the study of GOD's blessed word, and in the constant round of holy services, they "go on from strength to strength," "rooted and built up in Him" Who is "Head over all," even CHRIST.

It was a due sense of the importance of rendering this round of holy services, both glorious, in honour of GOD, and soul-stirring, in aid of His worshippers, that made David so anxious to build a Temple, in the place of the Tabernacle, now grown old, and unsuitable for the service of GOD in its grandeur, when Israel had at last found rest in the land of Promise.¹ The work was neither small nor unimportant. GOD's own estimate of its importance may be gathered from the sanction given by Him to the vast preparation and minute arrangements made by David for the building; but especially, perhaps, in His command, that so holy a task should not be undertaken by David, the man of war, but left to Solomon, whose name indicates the man of peace.² In studying and arranging the services of GOD on earth, not only zeal is required, but wisdom; so in preparing Solomon for the great work, we find David's special prayer is that he may have *wisdom*.³ A lesson, surely, this, to those who think light of the manner in which the worship of the Almighty is

¹ Evening Lesson; ² verses 8, 9; ³ verse 12.

performed ; who encourage slovenliness, and think more of the comfort or whims of the worshippers than of the glory of Him Whom they worship ; who imagine that their fancies, or peculiar notions, can devise forms of worship more acceptable than those appointed by our Church built by the *true* Solomon, "the Prince of Peace," and guided by the truest wisdom, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The Morning Lesson tells us of David's sin in numbering the people, with the intention, perhaps, of affording a warning to us of the danger which ever exists, even for them in whose hearts the love of GOD is engrafted, of falling again and again into sin. As Hezekiah showed his treasures to the messenger of the king of Babylon to vaunt his wealth, so David, perhaps, caused his subjects to be numbered as a boast of his power. The love of GOD, however, engrafted in his heart, soon brought back the Royal sinner to true and earnest penitence.¹ The vision of David's speedy and heartfelt penitence, bearing fruit in the preparation of the Temple, brings back to our mind the truth of that which David predicted of Solomon, which was true also of David himself, and of all who unfeignedly love the LORD. "He will not fail thee nor forsake thee, therefore fear not, neither be dismayed."² Pardon, we cannot indeed *win* by our penitence, but pardon is given only to those who *with penitence* (like David) seek it, sorrowing bitterly that they have offended so good, so loving a GOD and Father. Let us, then, learn from the services of this day to keep and train our hearts with as much diligence as if the

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 8.

² Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 20.

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success depended upon ourselves; while, at the same time, we trust entirely to the "power and might" of Him Who is the "author and giver of all good things."¹

So shall we indeed become as "trees planted by the water-side, whose leaf shall not wither, but who will bring forth fruit in due season;" and thus, living here as "green olive trees in the house of GOD," (Psalm lii. 8,) we shall "go from strength to strength," until we "flourish in the courts of the house of our GOD." (Psalms lxxxiv. 7; xcii. 12.)



Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, Romans, viii. 12. *Morning Lesson*, 1 Chronicles, xxix. 9-29.
Gospel, St. Matthew, vii. 15. *Evening Lesson*, 2 Chronicles, i. or 1 Kings, iii.

HAVING been planted in the courts of the LORD's house, we are watched over by the special care of His good providence. The same merciful LORD Who engrafted us into His Church on earth, still gently guides and leads us; not in the paths which we think best, but in those which will most safely carry us to His courts in heaven. Such is the blessed lesson which is set before us this day. All mankind indeed are His care. This truth, which the opening of the Collect teaches us, Holy Scripture everywhere confirms. GOD giveth to all "life, and breath, and all things." (Acts. xvii. 25.) He looketh down from His throne in heaven, and beholds all the children of men.

¹ Collect.

He "fashioneth all the hearts of them, and understandeth all their works." (Psalm xxxiii. 14.) "All nations before Him are as nothing." (Isaiah, xl. 17.) He "ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." (Dan. iv. 25.) Thus does the never-failing providence of GOD rule and govern all men, as well those who know Him as those who know Him not. While, however, all mankind, heathens as well as Christians, are thus compelled to feel the mighty hand of GOD "ordering all things in heaven and earth,"¹ it remains for Christians only to entrust themselves (as we do in the second part of this day's Collect) to the protecting hand of GOD's good providence.

GOD's dealings are often far above the understanding of our mortal minds. It is often "hard" (Psalm lxxiii. 15, 16) for us to understand why those things which seem to be for our wealth, prove to us occasions of falling, while trials most grievous to bear are sent in mercy for our good. Only when we go into the sanctuary of GOD to "ponder these things" are we allowed to see in them "the lovingkindness of the LORD." (Psalm cvii. 43.) It is here that we learn to value things as "profitable" only so far as they advance or retard us in the favour of GOD; here that we learn, not to pray that GOD will give us what seems good and pleasant to *ourselves*, but that He will "put away" from us those things which He sees are "hurtful," and give us those things which *He* sees are "profitable" to our souls. Having thus prayed in the Collect, the Epistle goes on to tell us what those things are which really harm us. To redeemed Christians, who have been freed from sin and born again to a new life, nothing can be truly

¹ Collect.

hurtful but what entangles them again in those things from which they have been rescued ; nothing can be truly profitable but what brings them nearer to the prize of their heavenly inheritance. The temptations of the flesh, then, which in our baptism we have renounced, are our greatest enemies. However "pleasant to the eyes" they may now seem, (Genesis, iii. 6,) and sweet to the senses, we must not live after them, for the reward of such self-pleasing is eternal death.¹ As adopted children of GOD's family, joint heirs with His own Son,² we live for better things ; we look forward to higher blessings. Better is it that we should suffer affliction now with CHRIST, when GOD wills it, if by such means He leads us to glory hereafter.³ But when thus by suffering, GOD purges and prunes the living branches of His own "true vine," He does so that they may bring forth fruit. (St. John, xv. 2.) He knows us by our fruits.⁴ This is what the Gospel for the day would teach us from our Saviour's own lips. Though the words, as spoken at first, refer to the prophets and teachers of CHRIST's flock, yet it is clear, by what follows, that we may apply them to all those whom GOD has planted, and is bringing up in His vineyard. Just as naturally as the husbandman looks for fruit upon the tree which he has planted, cultivated, and watered, so does GOD expect to find the fruits of the Spirit in those on whom He has poured the dew of His heavenly grace ; and as the husbandman retains in his vineyard the fruitful, profitable branches only, so GOD admits into His kingdom in heaven only those who on earth "do the will of their Father Which is in heaven."⁵

¹ Epistle, verse 13 ; ² verses 16, 17 ; ³ verse 17.
⁴ Gospel, verse 20 ; ⁵ verse 21.

But what the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel teach us by precept, the Lessons would seem to carry out by example. The Morning Lesson seems to be designed to show us the *fruit* of David's repentance. He was not content with words only, but his awakened zeal was displayed in the sight of all his people. That glorious hymn composed by the "sweet Psalmist" for the dedication of the materials of the Temple breathes penitence and praise.

David had wavered, had trusted in his *own* strength, vaunted his *own* power; now in lip and life he shows his change of heart. "*Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory.*" "Both riches and honour come of *Thee.*" "Of *Thine own* have we given *Thee.*"¹ In that portion of the life of Solomon which is alluded to in both Evening Lessons, we learn that which we are apt to forget, namely, that GOD in a great measure puts our happiness in this life and in eternity into our own hands.

GOD did not force wisdom upon Solomon, even in answer to the prayer of David, but He gave him a *free choice*;² it was as a reward of his choosing *aright* that God heaped upon him the blessings of wisdom, of peace, and of plenty. GOD will not force us to penitence, to holiness of living, to love; but He will set them before us; touch our hearts with good desires; *give us the choice*. GOD grant that we may choose aright, that we, too, may make choice of the wisdom unto salvation, by which we may perceive and know those things which we ought to do. So, led by the Holy Spirit and plentifully bringing forth the fruit of good works, we may of GOD be plentifully rewarded.

¹ Morning Lesson, verses 12-18.

² Evening Lesson, verse 7; Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 5.

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The wisdom which we seek does not consist in saying, but in doing, good things, just as Solomon's wisdom was given him, not only for the sake of making him *seem* wise, but also that he might govern his people well, worship GOD aright, and benefit posterity by the sageness of his precepts. The tree that yields neither shelter nor fruit is useless, though it may be highly ornamental and delicately graceful.¹

Having sought the true wisdom, may we then have further grace to use it. We know how to obtain this, for we may approach the mighty GOD Who ruleth all things, and speaking to Him in prayer as our Father,² we may make our wants known unto Him, with a certainty that in His good time, and in the way seen best to His wisdom, He will answer our prayers and give us "those things which be profitable for us."³



Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, 1 Corinthians, x. 1. *Morning Lesson*, 1 Kings, x.
1-25.
Gospel, St. Luke, xvi. 1. *Evening Lesson*, 1 Kings, xi.
1-15, or xi. 26.

WE have seen how mercifully GOD on His part guides and governs us through life, by the strengthening of His grace and the leading of His providence. Now we have to learn how we, on our part, are to "follow His counsel, so that we may be hereafter received into glory." For this purpose, then, it is that the history of the

¹ Gospel.

² Epistle, verse 15.

³ Collect.

Israelites is brought before us in this day's Epistle, as our warning and example. Their passage through the wilderness is in all things a type of our passage through the world. The same mighty Saviour Who is now present with the members of the Christian Church, to lead them to their heavenly inheritance, is He Who guided the Church of Israel to their land of promise. He is "the Rock" on Which they built their hopes of salvation, as we do ours;¹ only they saw Him but darkly, through types and by shadows; we, through sacraments and ordinances of His own appointment. Thus, by their passage through the Red Sea² "GOD figures to us His holy baptism." It set them forward in their journey to the earthly Canaan, just as baptism sets us forward on our way to the kingdom of heaven. The cloud,³ by which they were directed, represents the Holy Spirit of GOD, by Whom baptized Christians are guided and illuminated.

In the water flowing from the barren rock we see an emblem of that refreshing grace which flows to Christians out of CHRIST's Rock, the Church; while the manna, "eaten by our fathers in the wilderness," prefigures that heavenly food which preserves the bodies and souls of Christians unto everlasting life—even the most precious Body and Blood of our Blessed LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. Thus were they, like ourselves, "grafted, increased, and nourished"³ by the hand of GOD. But if their state was a type of ours in its blessings and its privileges, so was it also in its temptations and its sins. Here, then, we are to take warning from them. Remembering that many who might

¹ Epistle, verse 4 ;

² verse 2.

³ Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

have reached the land of Canaan were "overthrown in the wilderness,"¹ let us also take heed that we lose not the prize of our high calling. The same sins which excluded them from the earthly, will also shut us out from the heavenly, Canaan. We, like them, become "idolaters," when we are led astray or entangled in the things of this world; we sin as they did, when we murmur against the ways of GOD's providence; and when we neglect His commands, or disregard His promises, we, like them, "tempt CHRIST."² We "think scorn of His pleasant land, and give no credence unto His word." (See Psalm cvi. 24.)

The Lessons of the day, in giving us the conclusion of Solomon's history, bring before our notice a striking and terrible example of falling away from grace given. Full of promise, with noble resolutions, good desires, and with an implicit trust in the GOD of his fathers, Solomon had ascended the throne; many years he governed wisely and well, using the gift of GOD for the use of His people.³ But temptations, which at one time he had resisted, overcame him at last, and the wise king of Israel forgot his wisdom and his GOD, led away by the allurements of his heathen wives.⁴ The reign begun in peace and prosperity, ended in war and disaster.⁵

Never can we afford to be off our guard against temptation. Sin once resisted will tempt again, and, perhaps, coming in a more alluring form, may lead us captive. We are never safe while travelling through the world of probation; never safe till the Jordan of death is past, and we are made like our

¹ Epistle, verse 5;

² verse 9.

³ Morning Lesson.

⁴ Evening Lesson, verse 4;

⁵ verses 11-14, and alt. Evening Lesson, verse 26.

LORD, free from sin and temptation, when "we shall see Him as He is." And finally, from the Lessons let us learn the most prolific source of sin, the most dangerous form of temptation, namely, that which attacks us through our self-love, which leads us astray through the fear of offending others, and by the dread of the mockery of those we love, or in whose good opinion we wish to be ; well may we pray to GOD, in the Collect, that we may be able to live according to *His* will, when it is so hard to resist living according to our *own* will, or that of the world around us.

This world is to us as the wilderness was to the Israelites, a place of trial ; and upon our use or abuse of its good things will depend our safe arrival in the world to come. Such is the lesson which we draw from the parable of the unjust steward, read to us in the Gospel for the day. In reading this passage, we must remember that a parable is merely a figure of speech, which teaches us high and heavenly mysteries by means of common and familiar things. The persons mentioned in it are not held up for our imitation in their own characters, but merely according to the part they bear in the parable. Thus an inanimate object, or even a bad man, may be put to teach us a divine lesson. So it is with the unjust steward. With his own conduct we have nothing to do ; but only to learn from it the lesson which our LORD intended it should convey. The office of a steward represents the relation in which Christians stand to GOD with regard to their worldly possessions. They have received them only in trust, "to minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold gifts of GOD." The steward in the parable thinks only how to make such a use of the

riches committed to his charge as will be profitable to his future welfare.¹ He neglects no opportunity of securing to himself, through their means, an entrance into a permanent habitation ; and so it is that he teaches us a profitable lesson.

While we live in this world, we each hold gifts at the hand of GOD, by the faithful, or unfaithful, use of which, we obtain for ourselves entrance into, or banishment from, the courts of heaven. "Riches, when used by the owners thereof to their hurt," make it difficult, and even impossible, for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven (Eccles. v. 13, St. Matthew xix. 25) ; when used to the glory of GOD, they may become a means of admission into the everlasting habitations. And, as with riches, so also is it with all other talents. Time, and learning, and spiritual advantages, are all of them gifts for which every one of us must give an account to GOD. Let the "children of light" learn to improve these precious talents as the children of this world use their earthly goods. With as much diligence as the worldly man improves his possessions to his temporal advantage, so let the Christian use them to GOD's glory and his neighbour's good. Thus will things which in themselves are indifferent, and which might become hurtful, turn on the contrary to our spiritual advancement. Even the "mammon of unrighteousness,"² used in this manner, may secure for us "a treasure in the heavens which faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth."

Seeing, then, how much depends upon the way in which Christians pass through the world, and how many and great are the dangers which beset them in it, we must trust for safety to no less a

¹ Gospel, verses 3, 4 ;

² verse 9.

must join that spirit of self-renunciation and dependence upon GOD, which is the second condition of acceptable prayer. It is to such a state of mind that the services of the past Sundays have been gradually leading us. Having seen that GOD knows better than we do what is hurtful or profitable to us; having made the good things of His everlasting habitations, not those of this world, our portion,¹ we shall now desire His will rather than our own,—we shall ask for the things that please Him, rather than those which please ourselves.² The Christian's prayer, if offered up in this manner, will ever be answered for his good. Even if temporal things should be its object, they will be granted, only, as far as GOD's good pleasure sees to be most profitable for him.

Spiritual gifts, however, are those which Christians most need, and which it is most pleasing to GOD that we should ask for. It is, therefore, "concerning spiritual gifts,"³ that the Epistle for this day instructs us. In this passage, St. Paul alludes to those miraculous gifts of the Spirit which were poured out upon the first hearers of the Gospel. But what is said of those early Christians, may be applicable also to us. The one and the self-same Spirit Who then bestowed the gifts of miracles, and of healing, and of prophecy,⁴ still worketh in every baptized Christian, dividing to every man severally as He will.⁵ Upon each and all of us, according as we pray for them, does He bestow and increase His manifold gifts of grace. Let us, then, learn in that holy "house of prayer,"⁶ of which the Gospel speaks, both how to seek

¹ Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

² Epistle, verse 1; ⁴ verses 9, 10;

⁶ Gospel, verse 46.

³ Collect.

⁵ verse 11.

these gifts, and how to use them when we have obtained them. It is in the LORD's own house that CHRIST teaches His disciples how to pray. The prayers which are here put into our mouths, being all formed after the pattern of that given by the LORD Himself, are those by which Christians may learn, both how to live and how to pray. Here it is that we desire "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness;" and having obtained these precious gifts, here again we are taught to show our value for them in our lives as well as by our lips. By praying, as we do, for "a *daily* increase of them," that "we may be *daily* renewed" by them, we bind ourselves to use them daily to GOD's glory in that station which He has called upon us to fill. Such are the prayers to which GOD's merciful ears are ever open,¹ and to which a blessing is attached. It is only when our prayers and wishes are contrary to GOD's will, that they draw down upon us a curse, and not a blessing. In order to pray aright, it is necessary that *our* desires should be in accordance with GOD's will, then we may be sure that our prayers will be acceptable in GOD's sight. It was the wrong direction of Jeroboam's wishes that lost to him all the promises which had been made by Ahijah the prophet. (1 Kings, xi. 38.) Jeroboam's desire was not to serve GOD, and lead his people to serve GOD, but to strengthen his own position at any cost, thus he was led to an act of idolatry and his name became accursed as the man "that made Israel to sin." Rehoboam also did not desire to govern his people right, and to learn the wisdom which his father had gained,

¹ Collect.

but merely to keep up his nominal authority, to maintain his personal grandeur, and to follow his own selfish desires; the result was the loss of half his kingdom.

The prophet sent to prophecy against the altar of Jeroboam was tempted to disobey the strict injunction under which he had been sent by God. He resisted the invitation of Jeroboam, he yielded to that of the old prophet of Bethel. Instead of seeking guidance of GOD he accepted¹ the word of man, he followed the advice to which his own desires urged him. His reward was death.² A glorious contrast to these sad histories is found in the alternative Evening Lesson, where Elijah, whose only desire was "for such things as please GOD," was content to go to apparent starvation in the wilderness, and was rewarded, not only by being himself miraculously fed, but in being empowered to impart miraculous sustenance to the widow whose hospitality he had sought. Let us learn a watchfulness over our desires and thoughts, lest, when we pray, we find no answer because our hearts are not right in the sight of GOD. It is hard, for the flesh is weak; but He Who hears and presents our prayers before the throne of grace is Himself touched with a feeling of our infirmities; He Who shed tears over the erring and sinful Jerusalem³ is surely none the less full of compassion now for His erring and weak children. If we seek Him now in this our day, desiring the things which belong to our eternal peace, His eye will be upon us, and His ear ever open to our prayers. The sacrifice of our humble and devout prayers will ascend with the incense upon the golden altar which is before the throne. (Rev. viii. 3.) So shall He

¹ Morning Lesson. ² Evening Lesson. ³ Gospel.

hear our voice out of His holy temple, and our complaint shall come before Him, it shall enter even into His ears. The LORD will hear our petition,—the LORD will receive our prayer. (Psalm vi. 9.)



Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, 1 Corinthians, xv. 1. *Morning Lesson*, 1 Kings, xviii.

Gospel, St. Luke, xviii. 9. *Evening Lesson*, 1 Kings, xix or xxi.

NEXT Sunday the Church taught us how to pray, and what to pray for. She bade us seek GOD's manifold gifts of grace in preference to all other benefits. To-day she would lead us on to see the result of our petitions. She would show us how the precious gift of GOD's grace, sought and obtained by prayer, is to show itself in our lives; how it is to guide and govern us here, so as to secure for us an eternal treasure hereafter.

The Collect again leads us to GOD's throne of grace; and in doing so provides us with such words as will most effectually encourage us to approach the Majesty of GOD. The thought of GOD upon His glorious throne, exercising His Almighty power, might so overwhelm us with awe as to take away our powers of utterance, were we not reminded at the opening of this prayer, that He declareth it most chiefly in showing mercy and pity;¹ therefore we "may come boldly to the throne of grace, knowing that we shall find mercy and grace to help us in the time of need." But

¹ Collect.

the Collect goes on to teach us how to improve the gift of GOD's grace, when bestowed. Like the gift of bodily strength or any other precious talent, it will profit us only in proportion to our use of it. GOD sets before us a "heavenly treasure," promising it to us as His free gift. He points to the way of His commandments, as the road by which we may attain to it. He promises grace sufficient to enable us to "run in the way of His commandments," but His grace will not force us to do so without our own endeavours, any more than bodily strength would force us to run, while our feet refused to make a step. When, therefore, we have offered up this prayer, we must be so much the more diligent in running the way of GOD's commandments. We must strive to work out our salvation in that particular path in which His Providence has placed us, trusting that He will supply us with such a measure of His grace as is necessary for the duties which specially belong to it. Our very dependence upon GOD's grace will increase rather than slacken our exertions; for knowing the excellency of the gift that is in us, we shall use our utmost endeavours to improve it, lest we should have received it in vain. Thus it is, that the power to will and to do what is right is GOD's free gift, while upon us it depends whether we fulfil the same.

Of this great truth St. Paul everywhere labours to convince us, but more especially does he teach it in the Epistle for this day. In the first part of this passage he leads us to the blessed atonement of JESUS CHRIST, as the only cause of our salvation.¹ He declares unto us how that CHRIST died for our sins, and rose again for our justification;

¹ Epistle, verses 1-5.

thus bestowing upon us the free gift of the "gospel of the grace of GOD." (Acts, xx. 24.) Then from his own example the Apostle goes on to teach us how this mighty gift is to work in us. He ever kept in remembrance the sense of his past transgression, even though it had been committed in ignorance.¹ He "laboured more abundantly than they all;"² yet he ascribed everything to the "grace of GOD" which was with him. So must we, like him, repent, and run, and strive, while at the same time we ascribe all to the mighty power of a risen and crucified Saviour.

In the Morning Lesson we see GOD's mercy and pity in raising up to the persecuted prophets a friend in the very court of their persecutor.³ At the same time, and in contrast to this, we read of His wrath and indignation against the persistent idolatry of the Israelites and the stubborn iniquity of Ahab and Jezebel.⁴ No terrors, no miracles, no mercy, could turn the selfish, idle soul of Ahab to his GOD, though GOD was ever ready to show him mercy and pity; and did even relax the terrors of His judgment in sight of his real, though not persisted in, repentance.⁵

As we turn to see GOD's dealings with the worn-out and despairing prophet,⁶ the same properties shine forth. The "still small voice" following on the terrors of the wind, the fire, and the earthquake, reassures the waverer, and sends him back to his work renewed and invigorated, by the grace of GOD, to run the way of His commandments, and finally be made a partaker of His heavenly treasure.⁷

¹ Epistle, verse 9;

² Morning Lesson, verse 4;

³ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 29.

⁷ Collect.

² verse 10.

⁴ verses 17-40.

⁶ Evening Lesson.

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Truly, like Elijah, we need all the encouragement, all the strength that GOD will give us for the battle of life. Often we are inclined to despair for our sins, to look to the future with hopelessness and dread. Yet why should we do so? may we not, like the Publican, pray, "GOD be merciful to me a sinner,"¹ and do we not *know* that His Almighty power is declared "most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity."² It is lack of faith, then, which alone can make us despair; lack of desire which alone can keep us from throwing ourselves on our Father's mercy, and fighting in our Saviour's strength.



Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, 2 Corinthians, iii. 4. *Morning Lesson*, 1 Kings, xxii. 1-41.
Gospel, St. Mark, vii. 31. *Evening Lesson*, 2 Kings, ii. 1-16, or iv. 8-38.

URING the last two Sundays we have been dwelling on the proofs of GOD's love towards us. We have looked upon Him as a GOD of mercy, answering our prayers,³ and strengthening us with His grace.⁴ Now we have to learn how sinners, such as we are, come to be admitted to such glorious privileges; and it is this which the Church would unfold to us in the Epistle for this day. By setting before us as in contrast, the advantages of the new dispensation over the

¹ Gospel.

² Collect.

³ Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

⁴ Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

old¹ she would teach us to ascribe all these benefits to our participation in the Gospel covenant.

The language of the Apostle, in this passage, is therefore intended to show us in what these advantages consist. To do this more clearly, he refers us at once to the mysterious circumstance under which Moses received the Tables of the Law. When Moses came down from the Mount, the brightness that illuminated him was such, that the children of Israel could not behold the glory of his countenance.² He was obliged to put a veil over his face that they might be able to look upon him. Under this miraculous brightness is represented to us, in a type, the light of the glorious Gospel of GOD gleaming through the ordinances of the law. This light, if displayed to men all at once, would have been as overpowering to their souls as the glory of Moses' face was to their bodily senses. GOD therefore ordained that they should be gradually prepared for it, by means of an inferior covenant. He gave them a law which was to bring them to a knowledge of sin, and point out to them the way of obedience. He gave them types, and ordinances, and ceremonies, under which was prefigured and foreshadowed the great atonement of the promised Redeemer. Thus the people of GOD, under the first covenant, walked as beneath a veil. They were to obey the law according to "the letter," for they knew not the "spirit" which was veiled under it.³ They had to dread the "ministration of condemnation" which it brought with it, for they knew not yet of the ministration of righteousness and mercy, to which it was to give place.⁴ If, then, from such a covenant as this, there could shine out dim rays of future glory,

¹ Epistle ; ² verse 7 ; ³ verse 6 ; ⁴ verse 9.

what shall be the glory of that second covenant wherein the "veil is done away in CHRIST?" (2 Cor. iii. 14.)

Under this better dispensation, it is our privilege to live. "GOD, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST." (2 Cor. iv. 6.) The glory of GOD, which they saw but through a veil, we behold with open face as in a glass. (2 Cor. iii. 18.) The law, which they were to obey blindly, as servants, under pain of death, we, as sons, obey in the spirit of gratitude and love. The hope of redemption, which they saw but through sacrifices and types, we have seen fulfilled in the Cross of CHRIST.

In the Morning Lesson the history of Ahab, and in the Evening that of Elijah, is completed. Ahab's penitence had been short-lived. The first opportunity granted to him for a display of his penitence and a brave acknowledgment of GOD was thrown away; not only did he refuse to hear the words of Micaiah, but he thrust him into prison, and would not suffer Jehoshaphat to abide by his counsel.¹ How awful is the state of those who, like Ahab, time after time, neglect grace given, and go on, step by step, in the path of iniquity, dulling their perception by false words of penitence, and stopping their ears from every wholesome doctrine which may offend their pride, or interfere with their convenience. They may for a time flourish, but punishment must come. Let such pause to consider Ahab's death in the midst of his sins.

The Evening Lesson points us to a brighter

¹ Morning Lesson, verses 8-20.

picture. Elijah had also faltered, fled from his duty, despaired ; he, too, was called to repentance, rebuked, strengthened, and sent forth again. But mark the difference. He had fled for fear, he now boldly goes into the midst of the very enemies who sought his life ; he had been tempted to despair, now he defies the king and all his hosts, (2 Kings, i.,) certain of his success when guided by the arm of the LORD. His penitence was true, his reward great. While Ahab perished miserably, uncomforted, hated, in his chariot at Samaria, Elijah was borne away from earth, saved even the pangs of death,¹ that, in peace and rest, he might remember no more the strife of life, while looking forward to eternity with his Saviour. In contemplating the departure of the penitent saint and the impenitent sinner we may perhaps notice another point of contrast. The sin and holiness of each individual on earth has effect upon those among whom he lives and dies. Ahab had led Jehoshaphat into sin, which wrought its own punishment. Elijah had called Elisha to a life of special holiness, and was permitted that greatest of blessings—to confer on others the joys we have experienced ourselves. Elisha, as witnessed in the alternative Evening Lesson, inherited a double portion of the great prophet's miraculous power.

In the contemplation of GOD's dealings in the lives and deaths of these men, we may indeed exclaim with the multitudes who saw the marvellous acts of the LORD JESUS, "He hath done all things well."² Justice, tempered by mercy, is the law which we see runs through all GOD's acts. But, though He deals His mercy freely, He expects us, His children, to crave for it and to help one another

¹ Evening Lesson.

² Gospel, verse 37.

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to seek it, just as the poor deaf and dumb man in to-day's Gospel craved for and sought, with his friend's aid, the Saviour's healing touch.¹ How can we seek? How can we desire? How can we ask? The Collect both satisfies these questions and gives us words of prayer of which it would be well for us often to make use.



Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, Galatians, iii. 16.
Gospel, St. Luke, x. 23.

Morning Lesson, 2 Kings, v.
Evening Lesson, 2 Kings, vi.
1-24 or vii.

TO prepare mankind for the blessings of the Gospel covenant, has been the purpose of ALMIGHTY GOD ever since the fall of Adam. Last Sunday we traced this preparation in the law, or covenant of Moses. To-day we go back still further, and find, in GOD's covenant with Abraham, the sure promise of a Redeemer to come.² This day's Epistle shows the different positions of mankind under these distinct covenants; and then ascribes the blessings of each, and all, equally to the one Mediator between GOD and man, our LORD JESUS CHRIST.³ It was by faith in Him that Abraham was justified. Four hundred and thirty years before the time of Moses, or the giving of the law,⁴ Abraham believed GOD; and it was counted unto him for righteousness. He possessed that justifying faith which shows itself by simple obedience to GOD's Word, and

¹ Gospel, verse 32.

² verses 20-22;

³ Epistle, verse 18;

⁴ verse 17.

reliance on His promises. From his example, then, St. Paul teaches the Galatians that "man is justified by faith," not by "the works of the law." (Gal. ii. 16.) So it was in the time of Abraham. It was only when GOD's people mixed with idolaters, and corruptions sprang up amongst them, that more minute and ceremonial observances were required, to keep them in the right way. Then the "law was added because of transgressions,"¹ and was the means by which GOD purposed to keep alive amongst His people the hope of an inheritance, and the promise of a Redeemer.

Thus were GOD's people justified *under*, but not *by*, the works of the law. But when in the fulness of time, GOD sent forth the promised Seed, His own Blessed Son, there was no more need for these ceremonial observances, and therefore no more obligation to observe them. The promises which Abraham saw afar off, which the Church of Israel discerned but darkly through types and ceremonies, were then brought nigh to us by the Blood of CHRIST. This is the figurative meaning of the parable read to us in the Gospel for the day. CHRIST did for the fallen sons of Adam, what the good Samaritan, in the parable, did for the poor wounded man. Stripped and wounded² by the power of the devil and his angels, mankind had sunk into the lowest depths of sin and wretchedness. From this state none else but CHRIST could deliver us. The moral and ceremonial law, like the priest and the Levite,³ only looked on from the other side. They were not sufficient to justify.

But "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," (Rom. viii. 3,) it was

¹ Epistle, verse 19.

² verses 31, 32.

³ Gospel, verse 30.

left for CHRIST, the good Samaritan, to fulfil in us. He looked on us, and had compassion on us. He bound up the wounds of our sins, pouring into them His own precious Blood as wine to heal, and shedding over them the influence of His Holy Spirit as oil to restore and strengthen. But He did not leave us here. He took us into His Church, as into an inn or place of refuge where we might be kept in peace or safety.¹ With those appointed to serve in His Church, He has therefore left a Divine commission to "take care of us" until He comes again. Through their hands, He dispenses unto us the good things of His Church; and with them, He has left Holy Scriptures and Sacraments, to perfect the cure of our souls, and prepare us for His return.

Why GOD is pleased to make use of means, and conveys His grace through the simple Sacraments of the Church, we know not; and *how* He does so we know not; but the fact is made clear to us, and the command to use these means is urgent. It was but a little act that was required of the leprous captain of Syria in order that he might be cleansed;² so trivial did it seem that he well nigh refused to try it. Nevertheless, had he not dipped seven times in Jordan, a leper he would have returned, as he came. It seemed but a trivial act to cut down a branch and cast it into the water, yet that act, performed according to the inspired instructions of the prophet, caused a miracle; the lost iron floated, and the faith of the young student was rewarded.³ So GOD might cleanse us from our birth sin without Baptism, He could impart all spiritual life without Holy Communion; but

¹ Gospel, verse 34. ² Morning Lesson, verses 10, 11.

³ Evening Lesson, verse 6.

these are the means whereby He has commanded us to seek those gifts, and without making use of the means, when placed in our power, we may not hope to obtain the gifts. While, then, we diligently and faithfully make use of all the means of grace afforded to us in the Church of CHRIST, we may gather comfort in the study of His Holy Word, which abounds in proofs of GOD's watchful providence over His children. Though miracles have ceased since the clearer revelations of the Gospel, the record of miracles under the old dispensation opens our eyes to the fact of GOD's care of us, which surely is not less now than then. The wondrous knowledge of the plans and intentions of the Syrian foe¹ which was imparted to Elisha, the marvellous history of the angelic host and the blinded army,² the unexpected, though foretold, delivery of Samaria by a miracle causing panic in the besieging host;³ all these are designed to show us how GOD watches over His people and controls all things for their good. But the thought of GOD's care for ourselves is not to render us mere selfish religionists; like the "little maid," who, mindful of her early training, brought the great lord of Syria to a knowledge of the true GOD;⁴ like the good Samaritan who rescued the wounded Jew from a death of misery;⁵ so must we, by the force of good example, by the kind word in season, by the power we possess over those who are brought under our control, or within our influence, endeavour to lead others to the fountains of comfort and the waters of refreshment which we ourselves enjoy. So may we learn, each in his own way, to do true

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 12;² verses 17, 18.³ Alt. Evening Lesson.⁴ Morning Lesson, verse 3.⁵ Gospel.

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity. 261

and laudable service, and, by GOD's great mercy, we shall not fail finally to attain His heavenly promises through the merits of JESUS CHRIST our LORD.¹



Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, Galatians, v. 16.

Gospel, St. Luke, xvii. 11.

Morning Lesson, 2 Kings, ix.

Evening Lesson, 2 Kings, x.

1-32, or xiii.



COVENANT means an agreement between two parties, in which promises on the one side must be met by obligations on the other. So it is with GOD's covenant of grace and mercy in CHRIST JESUS. While it holds out promises, it also lays down commands. This is the truth which it is now the object of the Church to teach us. During the last two Sundays, she has been dwelling on GOD's mercy towards us ; His readiness to forgive, to hear our prayers, and give us all we pray for. Then she led us on still further, and told us of "the promise by faith of JESUS CHRIST,"² and the sure hope of an inheritance to come. Then the tone changed ; and, from promises on GOD's part, she came to speak of service on ours.³ Thus have we been prepared to learn, as we do this day, what are the conditions which the covenant lays on us, and how we are to observe them. The Collect teaches us this by the three words of "faith, hope, and charity,"⁴ it shows us how these three Christian graces exercised here, are to be the means of obtaining GOD's

¹ Collect. ² Epistle for Thirteenth Sunday, verse 22.

³ Collect and Gospel for Thirteenth Sunday. ⁴ Collect

promises hereafter. Faith makes us believe the promises ; and hope bids us, in patience, "wait for" them. (Rom. viii. 25.) By faith and hope, we realize the promises of GOD. We are persuaded of them, and embrace them ; we look forward to them as something which we are to have and enjoy as our own. But to "obtain" them, we must go a step further. Faith and hope lead us towards the enjoyment of GOD's promises, but they do not put us in possession of them. If we would "obtain that which GOD doth promise," "charity" must be added to our "faith and hope ;" the love of GOD's commands must go along with the desire of His promises.¹ "Charity" here means the keeping of GOD's commandments ; such a love of Him as will show itself by an entire devotion to His service. This blessed temper, then, unites all our obligations under the Christian covenant. In the Collect we pray for an increase of it ; and the Epistle teaches us how to exercise and cultivate it. This portion of Scripture being addressed by St. Paul to his newly-converted disciples, is chosen to instruct us, who, at this time, are considering our obligations under the Gospel covenant. It tells us how we, being led by the Spirit, and no longer under the law, are bound to walk according to the Spirit, and not to fulfil the lusts of the flesh.² To understand this expression, we must remember that in every regenerate Christian there is ever going on a mighty struggle between good and evil, sin and holiness,—between the love of GOD, Who redeemed us, and of the world we have renounced. This is what Holy Scripture here calls the "lusting of the flesh against the Spirit, and of the Spirit against the flesh." To

¹ Collect.² Epistle, verse 16.

overcome the one and follow the other, is the work which, as His children in CHRIST JESUS, GOD has given us to do. Each time we wilfully give way to a wrong thought, or temper, or inclination, we give advantage to the flesh, and fall further from the promises of GOD. When, on the contrary, we follow the guidance of the Spirit, then we grow in all those holy tempers which are said to be His "fruit," and advance, step by step, in our Christian course towards the attainment of GOD's heavenly promises.

These "fruits of the Spirit" are "the things which GOD commands;" they make up that temper of mind for which the Collect prays under the name of "charity;" and it is only by studying and contemplating them until we are brought to love and practise them, that we can hope to "obtain that which GOD doth promise"² hereafter. From the Collect and Epistle for this day, taken with the services which precede, we have learned something of GOD's mercy to us, and of our duty to GOD. The Gospel illustrates this lesson by example. CHRIST our Saviour has done for our souls, what He did for the bodies of these ten poor lepers.³ He has cured us of our spiritual leprosy, which is sin. By taking us into covenant with Himself, He has restored our fallen and degraded nature, and brought us back to a state of spiritual life and energy. But, as it was in the case of the lepers, so also is it in our own. Out of the ten who were cured of the loathsome disease, only one returned to give glory to GOD.⁴ Out of the many whom CHRIST has restored by regeneration, how few turn back to glorify Him by walking

¹ Epistle, verse 22.

² Gospel, verse 14 ;

³ Collect.

⁴ verse 15.

in newness of life. In the history of Jehu we have a warning of this thanklessness. He had faith but not charity. He believed GOD's promises, he fulfilled all the prophecies against the house of Ahab,¹ he destroyed nearly all the priests of Baal, and broke down the heathen temple that had disgraced Israel during Ahab's wicked reign.² All this Jehu did, because he knew that such were the conditions on which alone he would be permitted to reign. But though he performed GOD's will to the letter in the punishment of the house of Ahab, yet it was all with a selfish motive, and when the service of GOD clashed with his own idea of policy, Jehu fell away. The calves of Bethel and Dan were not destroyed by the exterminator of Baal worship.³ Thus may religion be carried on with merely selfish motives; a false faith may be entertained without charity; and so, while we think we are pleasing GOD by mere outward adherence to the duties He has ordained for us, we may be found breakers of His covenant when His will clashes with our own. May GOD give us grace to smite this enemy of self-deceit, not once nor twice, but even until it is beaten from the soul,⁴ and the soul wholly given to GOD in earnest charity. Of ourselves we are powerless; our hands indeed must draw the bow, but the hand of GOD can alone enable us to do so to good purpose.⁵ "*Make us, O GOD, to love that which Thou dost command.*"⁶

¹ Morning Lesson.² verses 28, 29.³ verse 16.⁴ Evening Lesson;⁵ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 19;⁶ Collect.

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, Galatians, vi. 11. *Morning Lesson*, 2 Kings,
xviii.
Gospel, St. Matthew, vi. 24. *Evening Lesson*, 2 Kings,
xix. or xxiii. 1-31.

THE promises of GOD, though offered alike to all, are applied to us individually in the Church of CHRIST. It is as members of CHRIST's Body the Church, that we venture to appropriate the great and glorious privileges of the gospel covenant.

Having been duly made to feel the value of these blessed privileges, we look now to the Church as the means or channel by which they are conveyed to us. We learn to love her and pray for her;¹ we are bid to live and walk according to her rule.²

The Epistle, taking the words of St. Paul to his Galatian converts, speaks of the happy change which passes upon all baptized Christians, at their admission into the Church of CHRIST. It shows us how, by our entrance into this holy society, we become partakers of the "liberty wherewith CHRIST has made us free," and are consequently released from the ceremonial observances of the law of Moses.³ Of this, the cross which was then signed upon our foreheads, is a mark or token; for circumcision, with all other Jewish rites and ceremonies, having once for all been done away in the Cross of CHRIST, those who bear this sign can

¹ Collect.

² Epistle;

³ verses 14, 15.

be under no obligation to observe them. From henceforth, we who have been baptized, glory in nothing but in the Cross of CHRIST. That alone is to be the sign of our faith, and the rule of our lives. Thus, having been freed from the law of Moses, we have to take upon us the lighter burden of the Cross of CHRIST. He entered not into glory before He suffered pain. He endured the agonies of the Cross, ere He entered into the peace of Paradise, and returned to the glory and bliss of Heaven. The long and lingering death which our adorable Redeemer endured, pictures to us the long and hard struggle which must be endured before our corruptions are overcome; and in His quiet repose in the tomb, we find an assurance, for those who persevere, that all their evil affections shall be finally buried in His grave.

Such is the struggle implied by taking upon us the Cross of CHRIST, and such the victory we must obtain before we can say, with St. Paul, that "the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world."¹

This great truth is further impressed upon us by the Church in the Gospel and the Lessons for this day. The former teaches us in the very words of our crucified Redeemer, how we, who are His followers, must deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily. This is what each one of us may find constant opportunities of doing. All Christians, who have taken upon themselves this holy sign, bind themselves to live henceforth as soldiers of CHRIST. He is the LORD, Whom they have sworn to obey; the Master² they have promised to serve. While, however, they are still militant here on

¹ Epistle, verse 14.

² Gospel, verse 24.

earth, other lords will be struggling to get the dominion over them ; mammon will try to usurp the place of CHRIST. By "mammon"¹ we are here to understand any project of worldly advancement which draws our affections away from GOD ; any gratification or indulgence or affection which interferes with our duty to GOD. It may be but a very small thing, yet, if not restrained, it may get the dominion over us, and so prove to us that dangerous "master" of which our LORD speaks. To resist this besetting temptation, whatever it may be, must, then, be our continual aim, even in our very childhood.

The struggle in which we are thus involved, may indeed impose upon us many difficulties, and self-denials, and many crosses ; it is in very truth a hard battle. Our LORD never hid this from us, always being careful to remind us that a Christian's duty is to take up his Cross and follow, that the way along which he treads in his Master's footsteps is narrow, and the gate straight, that leads to everlasting life. Is our heart inclined to faint when we think of the lifelong struggle ? does it despair as it beholds the temptations and sins which surround and threaten it on all sides, as that victorious Assyrian host surrounded and threatened the devoted city of GOD ?² Let us not listen to the coward whisper of Satan, who says, like Rabshakeh, "I and my army are too powerful for you ; make an agreement with me,"³ that you may at least enjoy life in yielding to my service, which is an easy one ; GOD cannot deliver you ; let not your teachers deceive you."⁴ Let us rather, in our fear, follow the example of the faithful Hezekiah—find out our difficulties and tempta-

¹ Gospel, verse 24.

² verse 31 ;

³ Morning Lesson .

⁴ verses 30, 32.

tions, our foes of sin done and of sin feared, and spread them before the LORD.¹ Would that we oftener resorted thus to prayer in our difficulties! Surely GOD is still willing "to keep His Church by His perpetual mercy,"² in answer to her prayers, as He preserved Jerusalem in answer to the prayer of Hezekiah! Surely, too, as through the mouth of the holy prophet, GOD answered the petition of the king,³ so through the ministry of His Church will He answer ours. Our souls will be comforted by the message of pardon, our wills strengthened by sacramental grace; and, as though by a miracle, Satan resisted will flee away, and the army of our enemies will melt before us, not by our might or power, but by the miraculous action of the Holy Spirit of GOD.⁴

Only when GOD does all this for us, when He gives us a foretaste of that peace which passeth all understanding, when our enemies seem for a time to cease their attacks, let us not then think that the struggle is over, but let us, like the good king of Judah,⁵ use these blessed seasons of refreshment and joy for the strengthening of our faith, the increase of our devotion, and the filling of our hearts, emptied of sin, with the true earnest love of GOD. Oh! would that it might be said of us "that we turned unto the LORD with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might."⁶ Without Thy help, O LORD, we cannot do this, "because the frailty of man without Thee cannot but fail;" but "Thy strength is made perfect in weakness." Lead Thou us unto "all things profitable to our salvation."⁷

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 14.

² Evening Lesson, verse 20;

³ Alt. Evening Lesson; ⁶ verse 25.

³ Collect.

⁴ verse 35.

⁷ Collect.

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, Ephesians, iii. 13. *Morning Lesson*, 2 Chronicles, xxxvi.
Gospel, St. Luke, vii. 11. *Evening Lesson*, Nehemiah, i. and ii. 1-9, or viii.

THE welfare of the Church is influenced by the prayers, as well as by the lives, of each of its individual members.¹ The members of CHRIST, as one great family, are taught to "pray one for another," (St. James, v. 16;) the people pleading for the ministers,—the ministers interceding for the sins of the people. This is a time when we are especially called upon to fulfil this duty. At this season, when the Church is about to increase the number of her ministers, our prayers are more particularly required, to implore the blessing of GOD upon the whole Church, and those whom He ordains to serve in it. It is to train us for the performance of this duty, that the services both for to-day and the preceding Sunday speak to us of the Church of CHRIST, and of the benefits we enjoy therein; for by thus making us feel the value of the blessings she conveys to us, the Church would more effectually and earnestly demand our prayers.

The Church is the family of GOD. Those who compose it, whether already triumphant in heaven, or still militant on earth,² have been made GOD's children by adoption and grace. They are, therefore, admitted to a participation of those blessings which form the subject of St. Paul's prayer for his

¹ Epistle;

² verse 15.

Ephesian converts. The Spirit of GOD, by Whom they are regenerated, dwells in them. They become His temple ; and so by Him are "strengthened with might"¹ in their soul or "inner man." By the same blessed Spirit; the love of GOD is shed abroad in their hearts. CHRIST, therefore, dwells in their hearts by faith ;² according to His own promise to those that love Him, that "He will come unto them, and make His abode with them." (St. John, xiv. 23.) So great, then, is the change which passes upon all regenerate Christians at their entrance into the Church of CHRIST, that it can be compared to nothing less than a resurrection. By it we become "dead unto sin, and born again unto righteousness." The "old Adam is buried in us, and the new man is raised up in us." To illustrate more fully this great truth, the Church leads us to consider the resurrection of the widow's son, in the Gospel for the day. In this, as in the other miracles performed by our LORD upon the bodies of men, we may see a type of those which He now works upon our souls. CHRIST, the Resurrection and the Life, Who stood by the bier of the young man, to bid him "arise,"³ is as really, though invisibly, present with each one of His regenerate members, when He bids them "rise again from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness." (Baptismal Service.) The influence of His blessed Spirit, which He then sheds upon their souls, is to them as the breath of their spiritual life, by which they live, and move, and have their being. The same mighty power which raised the widow's son from temporal death, also "quickened us" when we were "dead in trespasses and sins." (Ephes. ii. 5.)

¹ Epistle, verse 16 ; ² verse 17. ³ Gospel, verse 14.

But the members of CHRIST who partake of this spiritual resurrection, have been so raised in order that they may walk in newness of life. Having received, through grace, that "precious thing," which by nature they could not have, they must watch and keep the heavenly gift, lest by their own carnal will and frailty they should defile it. This is the object of the Collect which we use this day. From this prayer we learn that, without GOD's help and succour, neither the Church which He hath purchased with His own Blood, nor the members who compose it, can "continue in safety;"¹ therefore we must implore for them GOD's continual pity and goodness.

The awful anger of GOD against a degenerate Church and rebellious people, is shown to us in the Morning Lesson, which describes the last days of the kingdom of Judah. Many were the warnings that had been vouchsafed to that kingdom; they had seen Israel carried away captive as the punishment of their persistent idolatry, they had heard the voice of Jeremiah lifted up in solemn protest against their national degeneracy, "God sent unto them by His messengers," "but they mocked the messengers of GOD, and despised His words, and misused His prophets."²

We may not suppose that there were *no* good people among them. The glorious reign of Josiah, with its revival of true religion, was but just ended; many must have looked back upon that time, as did Jeremiah,³ with regret, and beheld the present degeneracy with grief. But as a nation, as a Church, they fell away from GOD, and as a degenerate nation and Church they were punished;

¹ Collect.

² Morning Lesson, verses 15, 16.

³ 2 Chronicles, xxxv. 25.

the good with the bad carried captive to a far off land. This history shows us one reason at least why our prayers are needed, not only for ourselves and for our friends as individuals, but for the body of CHRIST'S Catholic Church to which we belong ; that as a whole, as a Church, it may be "cleansed" from those prevalent failings, faults, and acts of disobedience, which merit the wrath of GOD ; and that she may be "defended" against the enemies without and the rebels within who may seek her ruin, and whose malice must prevail, if, for a moment, we lose the Divine Protection. It is our duty, therefore, to offer frequent and earnest prayer on behalf of our Church ; certain that such prayer is both acceptable in the sight of GOD, and will not remain unanswered. To strengthen us in this work, and to heighten and sustain our faith in its efficacy, we have placed before us in the Evening Lesson the story of Nehemiah, his prayer,¹ and the answer vouchsafed to it in the permission granted by the king for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the return of the captives.² It is a glorious sight, the return of those poor captives, and the re-establishment of the worship³ of which they so long had been deprived, in order, perhaps, to give them a double sense of its necessity and its comfort. Let us not carelessly leave that spectacle, but learn from it, that while we offer up our prayers on behalf of our beloved Church, against the time of trouble or the season of her enemies' triumph, we should not forget in the time of her prosperity and peace to make right and diligent use of her ordinances and ministry ; remembering the eternal duty and privilege of the members of

¹ Evening Lesson, Nehemiah i. verses 4-22 ;

² ii. verse 8.

³ Alt. Evening Lesson.

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that Holy Body, (the Church of the Law,¹ the Church of CHRIST, or the Church Triumphant in heaven,) to render "glory to GOD in the Church by CHRIST JESUS throughout all ages, world without end."²



Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, Ephesians, iv. 1.
Gospel, St. Luke, xiv. 1.

Morning Lesson, Jeremiah, v.
Evening Lesson, Jeremiah,
xxii. or xxxv.

HAVING seen what is our high and holy calling in the Church of CHRIST, we must now take heed that we "walk worthy of it." We must "go on unto perfection," growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. This is the lesson which may be learned from the services selected for this day. The Collect prays for the continual guidance of GOD's heavenly grace; the Epistle and Gospel inculcate the practice of those divine virtues which are its first fruits; while the Lessons warn us against the danger of misusing this most precious of GOD's good gifts.

It is from the Holy Spirit of GOD that the whole Church of CHRIST derives her spiritual life and energy. The Holy Spirit is to the body and members of CHRIST's Church, what the soul is to the body and limbs of a man. This figure, so often used in Holy Scripture, is especially dwelt upon by St. Paul in the Epistle for this day. By it, he would teach the newly converted members, their duty in the Church of CHRIST, and with this

¹ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 2.

² Epistle, verse 21

view it is now brought forward for our own instruction. We learn from this passage that we, who have been baptized by one Spirit into one body, have one common hope, one common calling. One GOD is our Father, and the same LORD is our one and only Master.¹ The same Spirit Who dwells in the whole body of CHRIST, and gives life to all its ordinances, also lives and acts in each one of its members separately. Just as our soul controls and regulates the movements of our body, and makes our limbs to act in unison and harmony—so also does the Holy Spirit of GOD control the body and members of CHRIST. He binds them together, making them to will and to do those things which form their special duties, and keeping them all in unity, peace, and concord. It follows then from this, that if we would “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called,”² each must seek for himself an increase of this blessed Spirit, and then follow as He guides. The grace of GOD, thus “preventing” or going before us, will put into our hearts good thoughts and intentions, and these, followed up and strengthened by the same holy influence, will be carried out into the continual practice of good works. Thus may we each and all be led to the exercise of those holy tempers which are laid down in the Epistle as the fruits of GOD’s preventing grace.³ The thought, that our fellow members are sharers with us in the grace of GOD, will bind us to them in the holiest ties of Christian love. Remembering that they may perhaps be even more the “temples of the HOLY GHOST” than ourselves, we shall be afraid of judging them harshly or uncharitably, but shall rather behave ourselves towards them with forbear-

¹ Epistle, verses 4-6; ² verse 1; ³ verse 2.

ance and long-suffering. Fearing to break the unity of CHRIST's body, and so grieve His Holy Spirit,¹ we shall strive with "lowliness and meekness" to fulfil the duties of our station as He points them out. Thus may each member, however humble his position, do his part towards keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; and so will the whole body, "fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, make increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. iv. 16.)

The Epistle having supplied us with motives and rules of action, the Gospel carries out these precepts by example. From the pattern and teaching of our Blessed LORD Himself, we are here taught to look upon forbearance, humility, and mercy, as amongst the first and highest duties of our Christian calling.

By an act of mercy, our LORD silences His bitterest enemies.² While they watch to find an accusation against Him, He cures the sick man of his dropsy. While they seek to condemn Him out of the law, He by this very act justifies His observance of it; for they knew as He did, that the law allowed acts of mercy and kindness on the Sabbath-day.³

Thus did our LORD silence disputes and reprove gainsayers; and thus may His members learn from His example. While men cavil about the laws of GOD and His Church, Christians must act, rather than dispute. While others would entangle themselves in points of law and doctrine, which are too hard for them, Christians must strive to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called,

¹ Epistle, verse 3. ² Gospel, verse 4; ³ verses 5, 6.

in forbearance, humility, and meekness.¹ So will they be bearing testimony to the truth of GOD's holy religion and ordinances, while they neither disturb the unity of the spirit, nor break the bond of peace. The duty of Christian meekness and humility is again more strongly inculcated by the parable with which this portion of Scripture concludes. From this passage we Christians may learn to fill each his proper place, to walk each in his appointed station. The feast to which we are called is the marriage-supper of the Lamb, the kingdom of grace upon earth, and the kingdom of glory in heaven. If, therefore, we now take in it the place which GOD has called upon us to fill, serving GOD, not ourselves; seeking GOD's glory, not our own; we may hope that He will bid us "go up higher,"² even unto the mansions which He has prepared for us in heaven. Thus our very lowliness and self-renunciation will cause us to be exalted in the presence of Him by Whom we have been bidden.

Such, then, are the blessed effects of GOD's grace upon those who receive it rightly. Very different is it with such as abuse their privileges and sin on against light and knowledge. Of this we have a fearful warning in the Lessons which we read this day. The prophet Jeremiah was commissioned to rebuke the Church of Israel for its sinfulness, and to foretell the captivity, in the event of their refusal to turn. Mercy and forgiveness had many times been tried, now came the time for justice and punishment. Often had GOD called His people through His love, now He must drive them by His fear and the terrors of His judgments. The words and message of Jeremiah were not only for

¹ Epistle, verses 1, 2.

² Gospel, verse 10.

the rebel Israelites, they are a protest and warning to the Church in "all times." If we have a revolting and a rebellious heart,¹ if we forsake GOD as Israel and her king forsook Him; but worst of all, if we permit "that wonderful and horrible thing, prophets prophesying falsely, the priests bearing rule by their means, and GOD's people loving to have it so,"² that is to say, if we smother the truth, because it is disagreeable, and remodel our religion, to make it suit our evil desires or lazy worldliness. If we refuse to hear or allow the truth, as it is in JESUS, to be boldly preached, and love rather to hear smooth lies about GOD's mercy (without justice), and the possibility of religion without effort, and heaven without self-denial or religion; then may we fear the out-pouring of all the vials of the wrath of GOD; then may we tremble lest a curse, more terrible than that pronounced on Coniah,³ may go forth against us, and may learn the frightful truth of the awful expression, "the wrath of GOD *abiding* in us."⁴ So must we always keep the terror of GOD's avenging justice before our eyes; learn to "fear GOD" as well as to love Him; never say to ourselves "peace, peace," while yet one command of GOD is left undone, while yet one desire of the Holy One is being neglected by us; never rest in our endeavour and struggle to serve Him, so terrible in His wrath, Who holds the keys of death and hell, Whose terrible fury upon the wicked king is revealed by His prophet for our warning. Like the sun bursting forth from the heavy clouds of some departing storm, so, even in the midst of the tale of GOD's wrath, intervenes some reference to

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 23;

² verse 31.

³ Evening Lesson.

⁴ St. John, iii. 36.

His mercy, some intimation that, behind those dark clouds of terrible judgment, the glorious beams of the Sun of Righteousness yet shine forth, to warm and illumine the hearts of the obedient and the faithful. The conduct of the sons of Jonadab¹ comes in the alternative Evening Lesson as a bright contrast to the profligate iniquity of Coniah, and we turn from words of condemnation² to hear the reward and blessing of obedience and love.³

Oh, how little is it that GOD requires of us! How slight a repentance, how small a prayer, does He permit to dispel the clouds of His wrath and bring down again the sunbeams of His mercy and His love. How can we rebel against so merciful a Father, Who is also the Omnipotent GOD! Let us earnestly pray that we may be given to all good works, and so learn to walk worthy of our vocation, called to be sons, heirs, not rebels, of our Heavenly Father and King.

¹ Alt. Evening Lesson. ² Evening Lesson, verse 30.

³ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 19.



Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, 1 Corinthians, i. 4. *Morning Lesson*, Jeremiah, xxxvi.
Gospel, St. Matthew, xxii. 34. *Evening Lesson*, Ezekiel, ii. or xiii. 1-17.

THE members of CHRIST have enemies to contend against, as well as blessings to receive. As they share the common gifts, so also they share the common dangers and difficulties of the body to which they belong. To resist these dangers and fight against these difficulties is, then, a part of our Christian calling or vocation; and it is to this that the services of this day turn our thoughts.

To-day we learn how we, who have "received the fulness of GOD's grace," go out in the strength of that grace, to fight "under CHRIST's banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil."¹

From these words, then, which the Church pronounces over every one of her regenerate members, we see that the foes we have to fight against are not imaginary; they are real and powerful though invisible, and, because invisible, all the more dangerous.

But to be able to withstand our enemies we must know something of them, and find out how they attack us. By "the world,"² we mean anything which entices or draws us away from the services of GOD. Its temptations may vary according to our different ages, circumstances, and char-

¹ See Baptismal Service.

² Collect.

acters ; but every one who serves GOD in His Church militant on earth is in some way or other subject to the evil influence of "the world" in which he lives. Upon some it works through ambition or the desire to be great amongst our fellow men ; upon others through covetousness or the love of riches. Sometimes it tempts us in the form of worldly ease or pleasure ; but if through our particular circumstances or station it cannot tempt us through these outward things, then it sometimes penetrates into the secret corners of our hearts. It corrupts our motives, and turns even our best actions into snares and occasions of falling. It tempts us to seek our own glory, not GOD's honour,—to look to the praise of men rather than the praise of GOD. We see, then, that as long as we are in the world, we cannot altogether withdraw ourselves from its influence. Old and young, rich and poor, all are in some degree open to its temptation ; therefore we pray to GOD, not that He would take us out of it, but that He would keep us from the evil of it. (St. John, xvii. 15.) But while the world thus attacks us from without, we find in "the flesh"¹ a no less dangerous enemy within. The temptations of the flesh are those which proceed from the evil of our own hearts ; bad thoughts and tempers, evil passions, desires, and inclinations. These spring up even in the very youngest and simplest of CHRIST's members to turn them out of the right way, and they must be resisted by the grace of GOD, by watching and prayer.

But "the devil" is the chief worker of all evil. It was through his beguilement that man fell from the state of perfect righteousness in which he was created, and the evil nature thus engendered in the

¹ Collect.

first man has descended to all his children. The world is only an instrument in the hands of Satan for leading men astray from GOD; the flesh is but the evil and corrupt nature in man, produced by the first introduction of sin into man by the devil, and then wielded by him as a means of bringing men into his bondage. Two sorts of temptation are specially attributed to Satan as not naturally arising either from the world or the flesh; these are pride—the very sin which caused Satan to be cast from heaven—and lying or deceit, for our LORD Himself calls the devil the father of lies.

Such is the classification of the temptations to which all men are subject, and the causes from which they spring, which is given to us in the Catechism, and which forms the subject of our special prayer this week. We, then, who are taught by the services of our Church, can never make the excuse that we have not had sufficient and solemn warning. But still we must be on our guard, ever watch as well as pray.

It was a most solemn, and plain, declaration of sin, and its coming punishment, that was made by GOD, through the prophet Jeremiah, to Jehoiakim, king of Judah.¹ But he refused to be warned; he destroyed the roll on which the prophecy was written, and sought also to slay the prophet himself.² Jehoiakim's blasphemous carelessness could not, however, make untrue, or destroy, the word of GOD, and the prophet was inspired, not only to re-write the destroyed roll, but to add words of terrible judgment on the wicked king. Even so may we blind our eyes to GOD's warnings, we may yield to temptations and commit sins, foolishly denying their guilt, or refusing to believe in their

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 3;

² verses 22-26.

punishment, but it cannot alter the truth of GOD's word, that they who do such things cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, and that to the persistent sinner there remains "but a fearful looking for of judgment." The Evening Lesson tells us of a somewhat similar message sent by GOD through Ezekiel to His sinning people. The devil, with his agents, the world and the flesh, had been busy among GOD's people, as he is busy now, and GOD in His mercy sends His warning in plain and terrible words. He speaks of the Israelites as a rebellious people, impudent, stiff-hearted.¹ He warns His prophet to speak out boldly against their sinfulness, not to be afraid even though it may be a hard task and but few will hear.² He will not let them be without warning; He loves them too much for that; and He warns them that the consequence of continuing in their sin will be lamentation, and mourning, and woe.³ GOD gives the same commission to His Church. Her ministers are to "preach repentance and remission of sins;" (St. Luke, xxiv. 47;) while encouraging those who strive to follow CHRIST, by the promise of remission they are to warn the rebellious, the stiff-hearted, the impudent—those who follow Satan, self, and the world—that to them is in store lamentation, and mourning, and woe. The alternative Lesson is one which dwells even more fully upon the duties of the ministry, in this respect, and occurs with much fitness on this the last Sunday on which an ordination day can fall in the year. Ezekiel here declares GOD's wrath, in no mean measure, against the false prophets, or preachers, who merely suit their teaching to the

¹ Evening Lesson, verses 3-5;

² verse 6;

³ verses 9, 10.

wishes of the worldly, and neglect to carry, faithfully, GOD's message of warning, and denunciation, to sinners.¹ The Epistle likewise seems to bear reference to this subject, speaking in the words of St. Paul both to those who minister and to those to whom they minister. To the one it speaks of the gifts which they convey; to the others of the benefits received through their means. All are taught to unite in thanking GOD for the grace which is given us by JESUS CHRIST."² We may all bless Him that He has given us such a measure of His gifts as will meet the particular necessities and dangers of the office or station to which we are called;³ and we may all join in the hope that, if we use them rightly, He will "confirm us unto the end, that we may be blameless in the day of our LORD JESUS CHRIST."⁴ Hitherto in the services of the day we have been led to think of the sins to which we are liable to be tempted, and GOD's wrath and warnings against them.

The Gospel directs our thoughts to the opposite virtues which we are to cultivate. As the commandments teach us generally what to avoid, so the duty to GOD and our neighbour, gathered from the commandments, teaches us what, as GOD's children, we are expected to *do*. Our LORD Himself shows us this, in His simple answer to the lawyer; that to love GOD with all our heart, and to love our neighbour as ourselves,⁵ is the duty of all Christians; and, as if to give authority to His injunction, He proceeds to prove, from David's words, that He is the LORD, the CHRIST, the Son of the living GOD.⁶ While, then, we pray that

¹ Alt. Evening Lesson, verses 3, 10.

² Epistle, verse 4;

³ verse 5;

⁴ verse 8.

⁵ Gospel, verses 37-39;

⁶ verse 44.

"we may have grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil," we pray also that "with pure hearts and minds we may follow GOD."¹



Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, Ephesians, iv. 17. *Morning Lesson*, Ezekiel, xiv. *Gospel*, St. Matthew, ix. 1. *Evening Lesson*, Ezekiel, xviii. or xxiv. 15.

IF we have been striving to carry out the lessons which last Sunday's services taught us, we shall be prepared to join in the Collect provided for this day. Our struggles against sin will have discovered to us our own weakness, and brought us to acknowledge that "without GOD we are not able to please Him."¹ To His Holy Spirit, then, we are this day taught to look for comfort, aid, and spiritual guidance. We learn how, when weak in ourselves, we are yet strong in the LORD and in the power of His might. This truth may in some degree be gathered from the miracle which is recorded in the Gospel for the day. In the state of the man sick of the palsy, we see, as in a type, the state of our souls when unrenewed by the Spirit of GOD. The poor paralytic of whom we here read was utterly helpless and unable to move. Until his friends brought him to receive strength at the hands of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, he could not even use means for his own recovery.² So it is with man unassisted by Divine grace. Until he is brought to CHRIST to receive the strengthening influence

¹ Collect.

² Gospel, verse 2.

Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity. 285

of the Blessed Comforter, he must remain in the state of spiritual inactivity and deadness which is described in the Epistle for the day. Living as an alien or stranger from the life of GOD, through the ignorance and blindness that is in him,¹ his spiritual energies are paralyzed or deadened; and so he continues in sin, working all manner of evil and wickedness.² Such is the miserable state of those, who have never received the Holy Spirit, or who, after having received, grieve and reject Him.³ But if our spiritual sickness is thus represented by the condition of this poor paralytic, so is our cure also. CHRIST, our LORD, first employs His Almighty power to forgive the sick man, and then, by giving him strength to arise and walk,⁴ He proves to the gainsaying multitude His divine authority to forgive sins.

So does He also in our own case. First, He removes the cause of our helplessness, which is sin; and then He enables us to show that we are indeed released from it, by the power which He gives us to walk in newness of life. This is the truth which is brought before us by St. Paul in this day's Epistle. This passage contrasts our helplessness as aliens and strangers from GOD,⁵ with the strength which we received with the "seal"⁶ or token of GOD's Holy Spirit. It points out the difference between the old man and the new,—between those who have "learned CHRIST," and those who know Him not.⁷ By these marks, then, we must search and try ourselves, if we would know whether we are following or whether we are rejecting the guidance of GOD's Holy Spirit. Lying belongs to our

¹ Epistle, verse 18;

² verse 19; ³ verse 30.

⁴ Gospel, verse 6.

⁵ Epistle, verses 17-20;

⁶ verse 30;

⁷ verses 20-32.

old or corrupt nature. It is one of the works of the devil, for "he is a liar, and the father of lies;" and it must be put away by those who have been enlightened and renewed by the Spirit of Truth. When, therefore, we are betrayed into deceit or hypocrisy, or any kind of double dealing, then we may know that we are not acting under the direction of GOD's Holy Spirit,—we are falling from a state of grace back again into a state of wrath. And as with lying, so also is it with other sins, such as anger,¹ theft,² or evil-speaking.³ The temptation to fall into them comes from the evil of our own hearts,—the power to resist them from the Holy Spirit of GOD. When we wilfully yield to them, we incur, independently of the sins which we commit, the awful danger of grieving "the Holy Spirit of GOD, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption."⁴ This is the ground on which St. Paul urges us to be so diligent in resisting the very first beginnings of sin in our hearts; and this is what we have to remember when we are tempted to commit any one of those sins of which he speaks.

The fear of resisting or grieving this Blessed Spirit will make us ever careful to follow His holy guidance, and so His influence will enable us even from our earliest years to overcome the evil of our nature. Thus, though we may feel angry, yet, if we resist the wrong thought, the grace of GOD within us will help us to put away bitterness and wrath, and to "sin not."⁵ Though we may be tempted to use idle or wicked or uncharitable words, yet if we endeavour to control our tongues, the Holy Spirit of GOD will put into our mouths

¹ Epistle, verse 26;

⁴ verse 30;

² verse 28;

⁵ verse 26.

³ verse 29;

"that which is good to the use of edifying."¹ We see, then, that though without GOD we are unable to please Him, yet with the help of the Holy Spirit to rule and direct our hearts in all things, we shall be enabled to do His will.

We are to notice, however, that the guidance we pray for is emphatically that of the heart. It is possible to serve GOD with the lips and by outward actions, but from the heart to disobey Him. This seems to have been the case with the elders² who came to consult Ezekiel; they worshipped idols³ by inclination, they sought the prophet of the LORD for respectability; they would not let GOD "rule their hearts," though they conformed *outwardly* to His laws. Of him who forsakes GOD's rule and sets up idols in his heart,⁴ is that awful fate foretold, "I will set My face against that man."⁵ And not only against individuals who wander away from GOD's allegiance is the terrible judgment spoken, but against nations. The nation which sins against GOD by its national acts incurs His wrath, and is liable to His judgments. Four great calamities are named as signals of GOD's anger against a nation, "the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence."⁶ And we are reminded of the instance of the cities of the plain when we read that the righteousness of individuals⁷ will not be allowed to save the nation from punishment. Surely here we learn the necessity of some earnest endeavours to spread the knowledge of GOD and His laws among our own people, and of doing our best to provide the means of evangelizing the heathen masses of our fellow-countrymen.

¹ Epistle, verse 29. ² Morning Lesson, verse 1; ³ verse 3;

⁴ verse 7; ⁵ verse 8; ⁶ verse 21; ⁷ verse 14.

We know how severely the Jews were punished for their apostacy in the destruction of Jerusalem and their own captivity; events typified to them by the death of Ezekiel's beloved wife.¹ The shortcomings of the Christian Church are punished by the dangers which beset her, the disease of heresy, the death of unbelief, yet we, as the Jews of old, are bidden, by Ezekiel's example,² not to mourn idly, but to repent of our inactivity and want of zeal, to pray more earnestly than ever that GOD may in all things direct and rule our hearts.

From these subjects of *general* teaching and the earthly chastisement of national sin the Evening Lesson diverts our thoughts to our personal failings and their future punishment. Here Ezekiel is inspired to teach us the principle of future judgment. Each man will be judged according to his own opportunities; as the righteousness of some will not avail to save others, so the wickedness of one cannot be punished in another, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die."³ The question then will be, not have you been better or worse than others, but have you obeyed the will of GOD in your own case and with your opportunities. Oh, well may we pray for the direction of a higher power than our own, that our hearts, so prone to wickedness, may be brought into real subjection to the will of GOD.

¹ Alt. Evening Lesson, verses 16-18; ² verse 17.

³ Evening Lesson, verse 4.



Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, Ephesians, v. 15.

Morning Lesson, Ezekiel,
xxxiv.

Gospel, St. Matthew, xxii. 1.

Evening Lesson, Ezekiel,
xxxvii. or Daniel, i.

WE have now been taught to live quietly and godly here on earth, under the rule and direction of GOD's Holy Spirit. Step by step, the Church has led us on, showing us how to add grace to grace and virtue to virtue. Now she would carry us gradually further to wait for the coming of our LORD. Looking out, as it were, for the return of Advent, she would prepare our minds for the right consideration of the subject of that holy season. Thus does she conclude her holy round of practical teaching. Having thoroughly furnished us unto all good works, she takes heed to warn us betimes, that at our LORD's return we may be found living in the constant practice of those good works which He would have us do. This is the object which, from this time, we may clearly trace in the course of her weekly services. In the Gospel for to-day, the state of CHRIST's Church militant here on earth is described under the figure of a marriage feast.¹ We are the guests whom our heavenly Father has called, or invited, into it, to share the blessings of His kingdom of grace.² He, Himself, is the King Who has bidden us. In the place of the Jews who refused His prophets and rejected His own Son,³ He has made us Gentiles to be members of His Church on earth,

¹ Gospel, verse 2 ;

² verse 3 ;

³ verse 6.

and inheritors of His kingdom in heaven. Here He provides us with the highest blessings which can be offered to the sons of men. He applies to us the merits of the blessed sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST;¹ He bestows upon us the riches of His grace, and sustains us with hopes of future glory. He gives us a new garment of innocence and holiness which He commands us to put on, and with which He will expect to find us clothed. By this "garment," we may understand that state of justification and sanctification which was spoken of in the Epistle for last Sunday under the name of the "new man." GOD first gave it to us at our baptism, and, with the gift, He supplied us with the means of preserving it.

We see, then, that it is not enough to have received it, unless we also preserve it, and bind it closely about us. The Lord of the feast, in the parable, had, according to the custom of eastern nations, provided his guests with garments suited to the occasion,² yet one there was, who, despising the hospitality of his host, had neglected to indue himself with the garment. When, therefore, the king came in to see the guests, this man was cast out from his presence. Though he had been duly "called" to the royal banquet, he was not "chosen" as worthy to partake of it.³ Here is the point on which our lesson this day turns. We also are expecting the return of our Heavenly King; we also are looking out for the time when He shall come to "see"⁴ and judge His people. We have had the wedding garment given to us, which is to make us meet for His presence, and we have been taught (especially during the season

¹ Gospel, verse 4;

² verses 11, 12;

³ verse 14;

⁴ verse 11.

Twentieth Sunday after Trinity. 291

which is now drawing to a close) how to preserve it and put it on. We must, therefore, take heed to the teaching of the Church this day, when she bids us so prepare to meet our GOD, that, when He shall return, He may recognize upon us that holy garment with which He once provided us. The chapters from Ezekiel chosen for the Lessons seem to bear out the teaching of the parable. The Evening Lesson gives us the wondrous vision of the prophet concerning the dry bones in the valley which came together at "the word of the LORD,"¹ and were inspired again with life by the breath of the Spirit of GOD.² This scene was placed before us in Easter week as a type of the resurrection, and we now contemplate it again in order to have clearly before us the fact of a future life before we are called upon to consider some of the means of preparation for it. But the types of the Old Testament generally had a double signification, and this one is also applied to the resurrection of the Christian Church from the remnant of that of the Jewish dispensation. The prophet is told to prophecy of a future united kingdom, from which idolatry shall be cast out, and a second David³ (CHRIST) appointed as its Head. As David tended his father's sheep, so would the Good Shepherd watch over His Christian flock, which should unite all nations in one fold under the one Shepherd.⁴

This simile, which was one our LORD Himself delighted to make use of, is more fully carried out in the Morning Lesson, where the office of CHRIST, in caring for the members of His Church on earth, is beautifully described. He will seek out the wanderers⁴ and bring them home to His Church

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 4; ² verse 10; ³ verse 24.

⁴ Morning Lesson, verse 12.

as He brought home the fanatic Saul; He will feed them as He has promised to feed us in the Sacraments of the Church; He will bind the broken, heal the sick; indeed, to all who will hear Him, and seek strength in Him, He will stretch forth His helping hand of mercy,¹ and shall pour "showers of blessing" upon them.² Only to the proud, and those who think themselves strong enough without His aid, will He refuse help, and against the enemies of His flock will He be fierce.³ To these gracious promises and terrible threats the prophet is told to add words of awful warning to those who are entrusted with the care of the flock upon earth. Woe to those careless pastors who feed themselves and neglect the flock; woe to those who ought to strengthen the weak and warn the faithless, but neglect their plain duty.⁴

In the alternative Evening Lesson the example of Daniel is held up for our imitation. His care and holiness in the land of idolatry,⁵ his simple obedience to GOD's commands, and his implicit trust in His power of support, are meant to teach us, by example, the same Lesson which we learn in the Epistle by the precept of St. Paul. First, to walk "circumspectly"⁶ or carefully; the more evil the times and circumstances in which we live, and the greater the temptations to which we are subject, the more careful should we be to avoid those things which most easily ensnare us, and watch against those sins by which we are most easily beset. Then, seeing that the time is short, and that the day of the LORD is at hand, we must be diligent to "redeem"⁶ or *buy it back* again.

¹ Morning Lesson, verses 15, 16;

² verse 26;

³ verse 16;

⁴ verses 2-4.

⁵ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 8.

⁶ Epistle, verse 15.

That which we have lost by idleness and folly, we must atone for by penitence and humiliation, and we must make up by increased diligence for that which we have wasted or misused. Moderation in all things is another part of Christian watchfulness. We who have been made temples of the HOLY GHOST, and whose souls have been washed and made white in the Blood of the Lamb, must refrain from any kind of excess¹ which may injure or defile them. Even though we may not be tempted to transgress by actual drunkenness, yet there are many ways in which the flesh or the body may gain such hold over us as to soil the brightness of our baptismal "garment," and unfit us for the service of GOD. Even in the youngest of CHRIST's members, selfishness, or greediness, or idleness, or the love of ease and pleasure, may defile the soul and mar the work which the Holy Spirit is there carrying on. Our aim should be to restrain these inclinations, and keep ourselves always in a fit state to serve GOD; so, being "ready both in body and soul,"² the Holy Spirit dwelling within us may fill our mouths with His praise, and enable us "cheerfully to accomplish those things which GOD would have done."³

Thus clothed with the spiritual garment of purity and holiness, we may humbly trust to be fit to stand in the presence of our LORD. When the King shall "come in to see the guests,"³ we shall be "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white," which is "the righteousness of saints." (Rev. xix. 8.) We shall find ourselves not only to have been "called" into His kingdom of grace, but "chosen"⁴ also to live with Him in His "kingdom of glory."

¹ Epistle, verse 18.

² Collect.

³ Gospel, verse 11;

⁴ verse 14.

Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, Ephesians, vi. 10.
Gospel, St. John, iv. 46.

Morning Lesson, Daniel, iii.
Evening Lesson, Daniel, iv.
 or v.

FROM the services of this day, we may learn something of the manner in which Christians are to await the coming of the LORD. Pardoned and cleansed from past sins, they must stand armed and ready, and looking out for His return. Thus from the Collect and Gospel we gather hopes of pardon and of peace; while the Epistle teaches us to put on the whole armour of GOD—that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

In order to attain to this state of preparation, we must first seek forgiveness and cleansing at GOD's hands. Sins act upon the soul as diseases do upon the body. They disturb and weaken it, and incapacitate it for the duties which it has to perform; therefore, until we are released from our past sins, we cannot go steadily forward in the service of GOD. That we may obtain this remission is, then, the object of our petition in the Collect for this day. In this prayer we ask for pardon; then for peace as the consequence of pardon; and having thus secured peace with GOD and with ourselves, lastly we implore His grace to serve Him with a quiet mind. To CHRIST, as the great healer and purifier of mankind, the Gospel for this day bids us look up. In the cure of the nobleman's son which it records,¹ we find an encouragement to hope that He will

¹ Gospel, verse 50.

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also heal our diseased souls, and strengthen them to serve Him. But as the nobleman sought his son's cure, so must we seek ours also. At first his faith was very weak and imperfect, yet he seems to have acted up to the light received, and so he obtained a blessing.¹ Overwhelmed with grief and distress of mind, he had thrown himself upon the mercy of CHRIST. He knew not yet the full extent of the Saviour's mighty power, but as far as he did know he sought to profit by it. Our LORD then looks mercifully upon him, and has compassion upon his ignorance.² By granting his request in the manner in which he least expects it,³ He discloses to him the wonders of His divine power, so that this nobleman and all his house are converted unto the faith.⁴

Thus does our LORD JESUS CHRIST deal also with repentant sinners. When, heavy laden and wearied with the burden of our sins, we come to Him to heal the diseases of our souls, He looks upon us with His mercy, and has compassion upon our ignorance and infirmity. Though our knowledge of GOD should at first be weak and imperfect, yet if we are sincere He will lead us on to higher degrees of faith. By using His Word only, for our cure, without making Himself visible amongst us, He would show us that He is as powerful to heal, when removed from our sight, as when outwardly present to the eye of sense,—thus teaching us to believe in His omnipresent power, and to walk by faith and not by sight. To us, as to the nobleman's son, He speaks the word only and we are healed. By this means it is that He pardons and delivers us from all our sins, confirms and strengthens us in all

¹ Gospel, verse 49 ;

² verse 48 ;

³ verse 51 ;

⁴ verse 53.

goodness, and restores us to everlasting life. But Christians, who have been pardoned and cleansed by the Blood of CHRIST, must watch very closely lest they fall back into the sins from which they have been redeemed, and so their last state be worse than the first. Remembering that they have to fight "against principalities and powers," against spiritual wickedness and works of darkness,¹ they must stand in the attitude of soldiers watching for an enemy, and put on, as the Epistle of this day directs, the whole of the Christian armour. Truth is to be to them as a girdle, by which they are bound about and supported;² righteousness, or holiness of conversation, the breast-plate by which their bodies are to be covered.³ As true followers of the gospel of peace, they must⁴ walk at peace with GOD, with each other, and with themselves. To this they have to add the hope of salvation,⁵ the defence of faith,⁶ the sure guidance of GOD's holy word, and the safeguard of constant prayer.⁶ Thus armed, we shall live as true soldiers and servants of CHRIST our King. Enrolled under His banner, resisting His enemies, and faithful to the post He has assigned us, we shall be found ready to enter in with Him, at whatever hour our LORD shall come.

The Lessons of the day give us striking examples of sin resisted and sin yielded to, the punishment of the latter, the reward of the former. Nebuchadnezzar had erected a huge image, before which it was his will that all the many nations over whom he ruled should fall down in idolatrous worship. The image probably was a representation of himself, and he desired to test the obedience and loyalty

¹ Epistle, verse 12 ;

² verse 14 ;

³ verse 15 ;

⁴ verse 17 ;

⁵ verse 16 ;

⁶ verse 18.

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of his subjects. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who had been exalted to the chief places of trust in the kingdom, were thus placed in a perilous position, either they must commit the sin of idolatry and offend their GOD, or they must disobey the king, lose all their temporal advantage, and incur the penalty of death the most horrible. They preferred the latter alternative, and were accordingly cast into the fiery furnace. But GOD was pleased to work a miracle in their favour; the fire, which refused to consume the bodies cast into it, did but burst the bonds of the devoted three, and the Angel of the LORD appeared with them, to protect them from the fury of the flames.¹ So GOD gives His Angels charge over His children, to protect them in the furnace of this world's trials; and to those who resist temptation, He affords comfort and strength in the troubles which that resistance may bring upon them. Nebuchadnezzar was much struck and humiliated by this display of Divine power; but his great wealth and success were a snare to him, and, though twice convinced of the omnipotence of GOD, he was yet unwilling, like Herod in later times, to give GOD the glory of his greatness. Against this sin of arrogance and presumption he was warned by a dream, which was explained, by Daniel, to refer to a period of madness which should come upon him in an instant, and depriving him of his reason should teach him that, not he, but "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will."² The holy prophet was not afraid to accompany his interpretation with an earnest exhortation to repentance;³ but his warnings were of no avail, and

¹ Morning Lesson, verses 25, 28.

² Evening Lesson, verse 25;

³ verse 27.

at the end of a year, the king's reiterated boast was immediately punished by the fulfilment of the dream.¹ But the punishment was mercifully permitted to work the cure, and when reason returned the proud king was prepared "to honour the King of heaven."² So will sin unresisted bring its own punishment, and happy are those, who in the season of chastisement, like Nebuchadnezzar, learn repentance. The alternative lesson tells a sadder history. Belshazzar who had ascended the throne not long after Nebuchadnezzar's death was besieged in the great city of Babylon. Daniel was still living there, but unknown to the king,³ a fact which seems to show that Belshazzar had fallen from the faith which his predecessor had learned. In the boasted strength of the city the king relied, and he feasted while the enemy was before the walls; he even showed his contempt for the God of Israel, by using the sacred vessels of the Jewish temple at his unhallowed feast.⁴ In the moment of his triumph the words of doom were written miraculously on the wall, and interpreted by Daniel, but it was too late for repentance, the enemy had entered the city, and Belshazzar was slain. GOD grant that we may seek His pardon and peace, having the condemnation of the wicked before our eyes, ere it be too late, and death surprise us in the midst of our sins.

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 30;

² verse 37.

³ Alt. Evening Lesson, verses 11-13;

⁴ verse 2.



Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, Philippians, i. 3.

Gospel, St. Matthew, xviii.

21.

Morning Lesson, Daniel, vi.

Evening Lesson, Daniel, vii.

9, or xii.

THE close of the Church's year may remind us of the close of life. As we gradually draw nearer towards it, our watchfulness seems to deepen and our preparations to become more complete. To-day the whole Church is directed into "patient waiting for CHRIST." (2 Thess. iii. 5.)¹ As fellow servants of the same great household,² her members are taught to live in the practice of mutual prayer, and love, and good works, that our LORD, when He cometh, may find them so doing.

That terrible trials await the household of CHRIST's Church, before the Master comes again, we are warned by the awful revelations to the prophet Daniel. He sees in prophetic vision the end of the world; "the Ancient of days" sitting upon the throne of heaven; the judgment prepared; the triumph of "the Son of Man" Who, in that day, will come in the clouds of heaven, the Advocate and Saviour of His repentant servants, the denouncer and destroyer of the wicked.³ But side by side with this vision of heavenly glory, the prophet beholds a picture of the antecedent troubles upon earth; the great worldly empires that shall in turn do their best to crush out the life from the

¹ Epistle, verse 6.

² Collect and Gospel.

³ Evening Lesson, verses 9-14.

Kingdom and Church of CHRIST ; and the mysterious reign of antichrist, typified by the little horn, whose power shall prevail for a time, even against the saints upon earth,¹ until the coming of the Son of Man shall destroy his power and establish for ever the rule of the saints upon earth and in heaven.² This period of terror spoken of (2 Thess. ii. 3) by St. Paul and in the Revelation of St. John, (Rev. xiii.,) and referred to by our LORD Himself, (St. Matt. xxiv. 24,) is once more revealed to Daniel in the other chapter, which may be read as the Evening Lesson.³

It is natural that we should be anxious to know more of these mysteries. We are inclined, like Daniel, to ask when and how this dread prophecy is to be accomplished ;⁴ but it is not for us "to know the times and the seasons"—we are to be content with the warning ; content to know that, as our day is, so will our strength be ; content to tarry the LORD's leisure, earnestly doing the LORD's will as His faithful servants, in the humble hope that, when He does come, He will find us watching. From these visions, then, of future trials which may be in store for us—trials such as the Jews suffered at the last taking of Jerusalem perhaps, or the Christians under the persecutions of the Roman empire—we turn to see, in the Morning Lesson, an example of courage, patience, and prayer rewarded. The aged Daniel, whose life had been one of so many vicissitudes, had been again exalted to the highest position of trust in the kingdom of his captors. Amid surrounding unbelief, amid the pressure of heavy duties and deep responsibility, he yet found time twice

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 25 ;

² Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 1 ;

³ verse 27.

⁴ verse 15.

daily to offer up his prayers and thanksgivings to GOD.

The native princes, jealous of the favour enjoyed by Daniel, procured a decree condemning all who offered any petition, save to the king, for thirty days, to be cast into a den of lions.¹ The fear of death could not shake the aged man, any more than the pleasures of prosperity had distracted him. His prayers were no less fervent, were no more and no less conspicuous, and the dread sentence was passed by an unwilling king.² But GOD was not forgetful of His faithful servant, and to convince the king of His omnipotence, to give us an example of His tender care for those His servants who "ever watch and pray," He sent His angel to close the lions' mouths. So will He ever protect those who earnestly pray and honestly do their duty in this life. Much may we Christians learn from the example of Daniel, who had not the blessed privilege of knowing CHRIST as we know Him. Here, then, we learn GOD's *protecting* power; in the Gospel we are taught His *forgiving* power.

Like the servant in the parable, our debt is more than we can pay; our iniquities "are more in number than the hairs of our head" (Psalm xl. 15;) we have "sinned and come short of the glory of GOD," (Rom. iii. 23;) and "the wages of sin is death." (Rom. vi. 23.) But as the lord in the parable freely forgave his servant, who came and sought his forgiveness, so will GOD for CHRIST's sake freely forgive us. He so "commends His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us." (Rom. v. 8.) In His Blood is declared unto us "remission

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 7;

² verse 16.

of sins that are past, through the forbearance of GOD." (Rom. iii. 25.) Thus does the conduct of this earthly king towards his servant represent to us, as in a very faint type, the mercy of our heavenly King towards the members of His household, the Church.

In the conduct of the servant, also, we may see a lesson profitable for our own warning and instruction. We may learn from it to look upon the injuries and affronts which we receive from our fellow servants in their proper light. Whatever we may fancy to be the amount of any trespasses committed against ourselves, those which we have committed against our Lord and Master as far exceed it as the ten thousand talents exceeded the paltry sum of one hundred pence.¹

If, then, while we receive such merciful treatment at GOD's hands, we fall into the sin of the unforgiving servant, the sentence uttered against him may also be pronounced against us. Our LORD, Who forgives us our trespasses "as we forgive them that trespass against us," may be wroth, and deliver us again to the "tormentors,"¹ that is, to the death and punishment from which He had formerly rescued us.

The Epistle seems to sum up the teaching of the day, and show us how as Christians we ought to live if we would be prepared against the evil times that are coming upon the earth, and ready to receive the LORD JESUS when again He comes in glory. As a good and faithful steward of CHRIST, St. Paul is praying for, and exhorting, that portion of GOD's Church and household established at Philippi.² From his words, then, we, as members of another branch of the same great

¹ Gospel, verses 24-35.

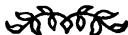
² Epistle, verse 3, &c.

household, may learn our privileges and our duty. We, like the Philippian converts, have been brought into the "fellowship of the gospel,"¹ and made partakers of GOD's grace. The prayers of GOD's ministers and stewards are still offered up for our confirmation in the gospel, and GOD's grace still descends in answer to their petitions. We, then, like those to whom this passage is addressed, must strive so to walk in GOD's law, and follow His divine wisdom, that our "love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment."² Being thus filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by JESUS CHRIST unto the praise and glory of GOD, we may trust "that He Who hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of CHRIST."³ And so, in the words of the Collect, we pray that the household of CHRIST—the Church—may be kept in continual godliness, and being free from adversity may be devoutly given to serve Him in good works to the glory of His Name.

¹ Epistle, verse 5 ;

² verse 9 ;

³ verse 6.



Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.

Epistle, Philippians, iii. 17. *Morning Lesson*, Hosea, xiv.
Gospel, St. Matthew, xxii. *Evening Lesson*, Joel, ii. 21,
 15. or iii. 9.

THE Church and her members are still represented as in an expectant and militant state, looking out and waiting for the coming of their LORD. As the services for last Sunday spoke of them as servants attached to the household of GOD, so to-day they are likened to *citizens* belonging to his heavenly country. Godliness is still to be their aim and object; prayer and watching, their preparation and employment.

To devout prayer, then, as the only means of obtaining godliness, the Collect for this day leads us. The petition contained in it would seem to be the result of the lessons which, on the several past Sundays, have been gradually laid before us. The parables of "the wedding-garment,"¹ and of the servant of whom his LORD would take account,² and the simile of the "armour of GOD,"³ have all taught us the necessity of "godliness" and good works; but of these GOD alone is the Author and Giver. He alone can supply us with "all things that pertain unto life and godliness," (2 St. Peter, i. 3,) for which, therefore, the Church now devoutly prays. These are amongst the "things"⁴ for which she so fervently asks, when on this day she raises up her voice in united supplication to Him Who is

¹ Twentieth Sunday.

² Twenty-first Sunday.

³ Twenty-second Sunday.

⁴ Collect.

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our "refuge and strength." We, therefore, as individual members of her one Body, must join our prayers with the general cry; and that they may be "effectually obtained" they must be faithfully offered up; that GOD may be ready to hear them, they must be "devout." Such, then, must be the prayers of those who are preparing to meet their GOD. What their lives should be is best described by St. Paul, when, in this day's Epistle, he tells us to have "our conversation in heaven."¹

The word translated "conversation" means more properly "citizenship," and to enter fully into the sense in which it here stands, we must understand something of the circumstances under which the Apostle used it. The people to whom St. Paul wrote this Epistle, as well as many of the neighbouring nations and towns, claimed the right of being citizens of Rome. Their citizenship with this great city gave them many rights and privileges which it was an advantage to them to possess. It procured their freedom, exempted them from certain punishments, and insured to them certain favours and indulgences. All these they were allowed to enjoy, even though born in a distant country, and inhabiting a distant town, provided they observed the customs and manners of the great city to which they thus belonged. Such is the citizenship of the Christian. Being by baptism incorporated into, or made a member of, CHRIST'S kingdom, he becomes a sharer in the blessings and privileges of the inhabitants of heaven. He is made a "fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God." (Eph. ii. 19.) Even whilst still an inhabitant of this lower world, his hopes, his affections, and his home are in

¹ Epistle, verse 20.

heaven. To this "city of the living God," (Heb. xii. 22,) into the privileges of which he is already admitted, he hopes one day to come. His aim, then, is to walk on earth as becomes the future inhabitant of GOD's heavenly city; to retain about him its customs and practices, and to live according to its laws. Thus the earthly things by which he is surrounded will lose their power over him. He will not "mind" them,¹ nor live for them, as those Philippians did, over whose sad "end" St. Paul here laments: Dwelling in spirit with those saints of GOD with whom he is now fellow-heir and fellow-citizen, and following their examples, the true Christian will look for the time when our LORD JESUS CHRIST shall come to take his body from the earth where it is now wandering, and admit it into heaven, its true and eternal home.²

But the people who held their rights and privileges in a foreign land, were not therefore unfitted for living and acting in the country where they resided. So neither are Christians. The duties which we owe to GOD, as citizens of heaven, do not unfit us for the duties which we owe to our fellow-men as citizens of the world. This, it seems, is what we may learn from the words of our LORD Himself in the Gospel for to-day.³ They were spoken in answer to those, who, in order to perplex and ensnare Him, pretended to think that the tribute, which as subjects they were to pay to their earthly sovereign, was inconsistent with the allegiance due to their heavenly King; and so they remain, as a standing rule and guide to Christians, in all times and circumstances of the world. GOD has indeed required that we should present our

¹ Epistle, verse 19;

² verses 20, 21.

³ Gospel, verse 21.

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bodies, souls, and spirits, a living sacrifice unto Him. He has created, preserved, and regenerated them; therefore they are His. By training them to His service, and using them to His glory, we "render unto GOD the things that be GOD's;" but in so doing, the duty or "tribute" which is due to earthly authorities and laws, need not be neglected or laid aside. Our different stations, positions, and callings in life must receive the regard and attention required by them, where that regard does not interfere with the commandments of GOD. To our sovereign we must pay loyalty and submission; to our parents, honour and reverence; to our masters, fidelity and obedience; to one another we owe love, mutual assistance, and a constant endeavour to promote unity, peace, and concord. Even our bodily wants and necessities demand of us that we should each labour diligently in that station of life to which it has pleased GOD to call us. Our different employments, duties, and avocations, being allotted to us by GOD Himself, our diligent discharge of them cannot but be pleasing in His sight, and may even be considered as forming a part of our duty to Him. By fulfilling them, therefore, we shall obey our Saviour's injunction of "rendering unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's," while at the same time we neglect not to "render unto GOD the things that be GOD's."

Last Sunday the Lessons were filled with terrible foretellings of future troubles to come upon the earth, before the judgment day. To-day, the Lessons are filled with words of comfort to those who, conscious of many wrong deeds, of much sin and unworthiness, are yet willing to turn to the LORD in penitence. Hosea exhorts the Jews to repentance, to turn from their idolatrous ways, and

seek again the LORD Whom they had forsaken.¹ He foretells ready pardon, and, with the pardon, the blessings of peace and plenty.² Such is the tenour of the Church's exhortation to us at this season, and in preparing us for the celebration of Advent she repeats the Baptist's cry, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The words of the prophet Joel, in the Evening Lesson, bear the same import. The land had been desolated by the scourge of locusts, followed by other insects, that had destroyed all the fruit of the earth.³ This national punishment the prophet proclaims as the punishment of national sin, and on this he grounds his exhortation to repentance.

He foresees the Advent of the Messiah, and the outpouring of the Spirit,⁴ as accomplished on the day of Pentecost, after the Resurrection of the LORD. The Church would thus remind us of our sacred gift, and point to the power of the HOLY GHOST as the means whereby we may rise to repentance. Enemies from within and without shall indeed assail the Church, but, in the might of the LORD, will she triumph over all;⁵ for GOD will ever be her refuge and her strength.⁶

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 1 ;

² Evening Lesson, verse 25 ;

³ Alt. Evening Lesson.

⁴ verses 4-8.

⁵ verse 28.

⁶ Collect.



small matter, but if wilfully and knowingly retained and indulged in, it may lead to another, and another, until the whole soul, wrapped in the bands of sin, is chained down and disabled, unfit for the service which GOD requires of it. Thus may we, little by little, be brought into that fearful state which Holy Scripture compares to slavery, when it tells us, that "to whom we yield ourselves servants to obey, his servants we are to whom we obey," (Rom. vi. 16,) and that when we commit sin we become the servants, or slaves, of sin. (St. John, viii. 34.) We see, then, why the Collect for this day prays so especially against sins of "frailty," or weakness; for these, though small in themselves, may be the first links of that chain which twines itself so fearfully about us. They may hinder the work of GOD in our souls, and render vain all the holy teaching which He has provided for us.

From all, or any of these bands, CHRIST of His bountiful goodness will deliver us. He Who raised the daughter of Jairus,¹ and cured the woman of her twelve years' disease, will also heal our spiritual sickness and restore us to spiritual life. But while, from these miracles, we thus derive comfort and encouragement, we also learn a lesson of spiritual instruction. In both these cases, it was the mighty power of CHRIST, acting upon a mind prepared by faith, which cured the sick and raised up the dead; but neither the cure nor the resurrection were accomplished until, by an outward visible act, those who received or participated in the blessing had proved the reality of their faith. This is especially the case in the cure of the woman. It was the mysterious "virtue which went out of"

¹ Gospel, verse 25.

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CHRIST (St. Mark, v. 30; see also St. Luke, vi. 19,) which healed her, and it was her faith which brought her to Him; but it was only when she touched the hem of our blessed Saviour's garment, that the "virtue" was applied to her, and she "felt in her body that she was healed of that plague."

Thus also is it with us who need to be cured of the deadly disease of sin, and restored to spiritual life. CHRIST, though no longer visibly present amongst us, has appointed certain outward signs, the devout use of which will be to us like spiritually touching the hem of our Saviour's garment. Such are, the water in baptism, and the sacred elements in the holy communion, whereby our souls are cleansed and strengthened. The cleansing and strengthening which they supply come from "the virtue" which goes forth out of CHRIST Himself; but it is only when by faith we use these holy signs that we receive the pledge or assurance of the benefits being actually imparted to us. Thus also in some degree it is with absolution, the blessings of which we are this day seeking. Oppressed with the weight of our past transgressions, we acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, and pray to GOD to absolve us from them.¹ So far, then, our faith has brought us near to CHRIST, and we may humbly trust that He will heal us; but that we may receive some outward assurance of our being so healed, He has directed His ministers to pronounce pardon and absolution in His Name upon "all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe His holy gospel." This is the means by which He now says to us, "Be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole."²

¹ Collect.

² Gospel, verse 22.

The Epistle seems to carry on these thoughts by setting before us the blessedness of being brought near to CHRIST by faith. This passage was originally addressed by St. Paul to those Colossian converts who had been so joined to CHRIST, and knew the grace of GOD "in truth,"¹ who had remained in the fear and love of GOD, and whom GOD was then ripening and preparing for His kingdom. He exhorts them to continue unto the end, increasing in the knowledge of GOD and in every good word and work.

The Lessons for the day, taken from the prophecy of Amos, seem specially to direct our attention to "the sins which by our frailty we have committed," and to warn us of the punishment which is their due.

The special commission of the prophet was to rebuke the tribes of Israel for their defection, in worshipping the golden calves set up by Jeroboam. He reminds them of their deliverance from Egypt,² and then points out their ingratitude in forsaking GOD, who had delivered them. As two cannot "walk together except they be agreed,"³ so they cannot expect GOD'S protecting power to be extended to them if they do not obey His Will. GOD now warns them through their prophets, and foretells their destruction⁴ as a nation unless they will repent. "Seek ye Me," He says, "and ye shall live."⁵ "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live."⁶ Such are the exhortations to repentance and the promises of its reward. Justice was despised,⁷ the poor despoiled,⁸ images worshipped,⁹ and the re-

¹ Epistle, verse 6.

² verse 3 ;

³ Evening Lesson, verse 4 ;

⁴ verse 7 ;

⁵ Morning Lesson, verse 1 ;

⁶ verse 15.

verse 11 ;

⁷ verse 14 ;

⁸ verse 26.

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sult would be destruction unless repentance was speedy. Special stress is laid also on the fact, that anyone who rebuked these vices was hated,¹ and an awful warning is given to those who wilfully shut their eyes to a coming judgment.² We know how terribly the prophecy of destruction was fulfilled, in the almost entire removal of the tribes of Israel, eighty years after the words of Amos were spoken. The prophecy concludes with words of comfort to those few who had not shared in the general iniquity of the nation, and the last verses of Amos seem to foretell the first coming of the Messiah to restore the kingdom to His chosen people. Let us take warning from these awful denunciations of sin, and "seek the LORD," ere it be too late. Let us not blind our eyes to the terror of coming judgment, nor close our ears to warnings against sin. Let us rather seek absolution for our many frailties, and in newness of life learn to be prepared for the coming of the Lord.

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 10.

² Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 10.



The Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity,

OR

The Sunday next before Advent.

For the Epistle, Jeremiah, Morning Lesson, Ecclesiastes,
 xxiii. 5. xi. and xii.
Gospel, St. John, vi. 5. Evening Lesson, Haggai, ii.
 1-10, or Malachi, iii. and iv.

 IN this concluding Sunday of the Church's year we are to sum up the practical teaching of the Sundays after Trinity, and so prepare to enter into the solemn subjects brought before us in the season of Advent.

From this day's Collect, we learn to understand the light in which GOD regards our spiritual labours, or "good works." They are to the Christian what the fruits of the earth are to the husbandman, the free gift of GOD bestowed according to the measure of our own exertions. When the seed is put into the ground, the diligent husbandman uses his utmost endeavours to bring it to maturity. Though he knows that it is the LORD alone Who maketh the earth to bring forth and bud, yet he acts as if the success depended upon his own labours. While he prays GOD to "bless and pre-

¹ These Lessons are, in the Lectionary, appointed for the *Twenty-seventh* Sunday after Trinity, but as they are always to be used—as the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel for the *Twenty-fifth* Sunday—on the Sunday immediately preceding Advent, they naturally fall under our consideration here.

serve to his use the kindly fruits of the earth," he breaks up the fallow ground, waters the tender plant, and spares no pains to make it grow and thrive ; and so GOD blesses his labours with an abundant harvest, He rewards him according to his exertions. Thus also is it with the Christian. His heart is as the ground, in which has been sown the seed of GOD's holy word. While, then, he knows that the power to will and to do cometh from GOD only, he will yet "keep his heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. iv. 23.) With as much care as the husbandman roots out every weed or tare which might choke the good seed, so does the servant of GOD root out every evil habit, and cast away every wrong thought, which might hinder the springing up of GOD's word within him. While he prays to GOD to "stir up" his feeble and languid will, he spares no pains on his own part to train and cultivate his heart, and seek for it the dews of GOD's heavenly grace ; and so GOD blesses his labours by an abundant harvest of good works.

Our LORD's miracles were so wrought as also to furnish us with practical lessons in our lives. The Gospel of the day bears its instruction and comfort both to ministers and people in the Church of CHRIST. As the hungering multitude was fed by a miracle of our LORD's mercy,¹ so through the year has the Church of CHRIST been fed by His teaching, dealt out by His ordained servants. As the Apostles' wallets (twelve in number)² were filled with the fragments of the food they had distributed, so may the ministers and stewards of CHRIST's Church be themselves supported and strengthened by the very spiritual food which they

¹ Gospel ;

² verse 13.

supply for the wants of their people. To all comes the injunction, "gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost."¹ Ponder over the teaching that we have this year received ; think of the mercies granted, the experience gained ; gather all up, it is precious, let nothing be lost. Let us be as careful of these precious gifts as the husbandman of his grain, let nothing be lost, but, being sown in the soil of faithful hearts, plenteously bring forth good works. So shall we be prepared to receive "the LORD our Righteousness"² when a second time He shall come to deliver us, not from the bondage of Egypt, but from the burden of the flesh ; to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, and receive those into their "own land"³ who are found living up to their profession as members of CHRIST, children of GOD, heirs of heaven.

And in this work of profiting by the instructions given us, and the means of grace afforded us, we must not be discouraged if the fruit at first is imperceptible. So long as we are endeavouring our utmost, we must not be discouraged any more than those Egyptian husbandmen who cast their grain on to the brimming waters of the Nile, and though it seemed lost, yet when the waters retired they would find a growing crop. "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days."⁴

It is not for us to know the manner of God's secret working in our souls, we have a plain duty, "Fear GOD, and keep His commandments ; for this is the whole duty of man."⁵ From our earliest childhood to the latest moment of our life, this is

¹ Gospel, verse 12.

² verse 8.

³ xii. verse 13.

⁴ Epistle, verse 6 ;

⁵ Morning Lesson, verse 1 ;

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to be the spring of our actions.¹ We dare not put off this duty till old age quench the temptations of youth or the silver cord of life be loosed ;² it will then be too late. As the tree falls there shall it be,³ and according as the man has *lived*, so shall he be judged. There is no repentance in the grave: the fruit of good works must be brought forth in this world if we would be rewarded with salvation in the next.

The Evening Lessons and the Epistle point us to the coming of the "LORD our Righteousness." Haggai foretells the greater glory of the temple of the Restoration, for that temple should witness the personal presence of the Incarnate Son of GOD, the Prince of peace.⁴ By His coming all the powers of heaven and earth should be shaken.⁵ The earth, which trembled at the sight of the crucifixion and resurrection ; the sea, whose waves subsided at a word from the Divine lips ; the dry land, which gave up her dead at the command of JESUS ; the heavens which were opened to the eyes and ears of man, that Angels and GOD Himself might declare the fact of the Incarnation, all these join in testifying to the truth of the prophet's prediction. But the world should not be without special preparation. GOD would send His messenger⁶—a second Elijah⁷—before His face to prepare the way of the LORD. And the closing words of the last prophet of Israel are a declaration of the office of that herald ; words quoted by the angel in foretelling the birth and office of John the Baptist to Zacharias.⁸ But these words of

¹ Morning Lesson, xii. verse 1 ; ² xii. verse 6 ;

³ xi. verse 3. ⁴ Evening Lesson, verse 9 ;

⁵ verse 6. ⁶ Alt. Evening Lesson, iii. verse 1 ;

⁷ iv. verse 5 ; ⁸ iv. verse 6, and St. Luke, i. verse 17.

prophecy speak again to us who are looking for the second coming of the LORD in glory.

We know not when it will be, but we do know that it will be our own fault if we are found unprepared. The Church, with her services and sacraments, is ever preparing us. By the gift of the Holy Spirit we are able, if we will, to live in such a state in this world that we may be acceptable, through our Saviour's merits, before GOD in the world to come. If we *will*; but our evil nature is always putting our will in opposition to GOD, and therefore it is that we now, on our knees, implore GOD's special aid to stir up our weak, infirm wills. May He, in His mercy, so answer the earnest prayers of His people, that we may be found to be the LORD's "in that day when He maketh up His jewels."¹



LESSONS TO BE USED ON THE

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity,

WHEN THERE ARE MORE THAN TWENTY-FIVE SUNDAYS
AFTER TRINITY.²

Morning Lesson, Micah, iv. and v. 1-8.

Evening Lesson, Micah vi., or Micah, vii.



HE Sundays immediately preceding Advent direct our attention in general to the coming of our LORD and the establishment of His Kingdom upon earth, as set forth to the Israelites, by the words of their prophets. While these Les-

¹ Alt. Evening Lesson, iii. verse 17.

² The Collect, Epistle, and Gospel of one of those Sundays omitted after Epiphany shall be used.

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sons remind us of all the blessings wrought for man by the Incarnation, while they illustrate GOD's justice, mercy, and truth, they teach us to look forward to a second coming of the same Saviour, and the solemn words of warning and preparation first spoken to the Jews of old, come home also to our own souls.

In the Morning Lesson the prophet, having in the previous chapters foretold the captivity of Judah, proceeds to speak of the deliverance which should ensue upon their repentance. In contrast to the misery, the war, the loss of their kingdom, and their utter defeat and reduction to slavery, he speaks now of a restored kingdom,¹ a time of peace² and glory,³ a season of victory over all their enemies.⁴ But that upon which the prophet's eye rests with special clearness, is the restoration of the spiritual kingdom to GOD's people through the "Ruler in Israel" Who should be born at Bethlehem, the royal city of David.⁵ He foretells in poetic language the spread of the kingdom by Him established, seeing it fertilize the nations, and spread over them its vivifying power, as the dew upon the herb, as the showers of rain upon the grass, which exercise their influence at the command of a merciful and loving Creator.⁶ That kingdom of peace and glory is ours; the fertilizing influence of the Holy Spirit is upon us, who are members of that Church of Christ.

Does it produce in us the fruit of good works, or are we only bringing forth the weeds of worldliness? Are our lives such as to show us worthy of so great blessings? The Evening Lessons are a final exhortation of the prophet to repentance, showing that

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 8; ² verse 3;
³ verse 1; ⁴ verse 13; ⁵ v. verse 2; ⁶ v. verse 7.

all the sins and miseries of man are due to his own wickedness, and yet that GOD is ever ready to forgive.

He reminds the Israelites of GOD's mercies in the deliverance from Egypt, in the matter of Balak, and in the entrance into the promised land.¹ He pleads the comparatively small return that GOD requires of them; "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with GOD."² He points to GOD's chastisements, but sees the reason in Israel's sin.³ In words quoted by our LORD Himself, Micah warns his people against the danger of being led astray by earthly ties and affections;⁴ but he holds out the virtues of patience and perseverance as the means whereby we may conquer all difficulties, and have a certainty that GOD will hear us in all our troubles.⁵ The conclusion is a burst of glorious confidence, which it may be well for us Christians to learn from the Jewish prophet.

GOD is ready to pardon; He delighteth in mercy; He will have compassion.⁶ Here is our great comfort, the chief source of our peace, our only hope, as, burdened with our sins, we look forward to the judgment-day with trembling. But let us bear in mind that we have even a surer hope than Micah was permitted to enjoy, for to us has been unfolded in its fulness the mystery of the Redemption, which he foresaw but darkly and in the distance; in our future Judge we know also our Saviour and Redeemer.

¹ Evening Lesson, verses 4, 5.

² verse 8;

³ verses 10-13.

⁴ Alt. Evening Lesson, verses 5, 6;

⁵ verse 7;

⁶ verse 18.

LESSONS TO BE USED ON THE

Twenty-sixth Sunday after Trinity,

WHEN THERE ARE TWENTY-SEVEN SUNDAYS AFTER
TRINITY.¹

Morning Lesson, Habakkuk, ii.

Evening Lesson, Habakkuk, iii., or Zephaniah, iii.

THE prophet Habakkuk was inspired to deliver his message in the reign of Josiah, and he foretells the captivity of Judah by the Chaldean or Babylonian Empire. The chapter for the Morning Lesson is an answer to the desire of the prophet to understand why the enemies of God's people should be allowed to prosper and conquer, notwithstanding their iniquity and idolatry, and why the just should suffer with the unjust.

The general tenour of the answer is, that the enemies of the LORD would not escape their punishment, notwithstanding their success. Five messages of woe² are declared against them, and we can realize the completion of God's wrath, in the total annihilation of Babylon, of which scarce one stone stands upon another, at the present day. "I myself have seen the ungodly in great power, and flourishing like a green bay tree. I went by, and lo, he was gone; I sought him, but his place could nowhere be found." (Psalm xxxvii. 35.) GOD may use the wicked as instruments in His hands for the chastisement and trial of His people—as He per-

¹ The Collect, Epistle, and Gospel of one of those Sundays omitted after Epiphany shall be used.

² Morning Lesson, verses 6, 9, 12, 15, 19.

mitted Pharaoh to enslave the Israelites in Egypt—but His justice will ere long bring down the deserved punishment of sin. GOD also deals with men in masses, as well as with individuals; the wicked share His blessings, at times, with the just; the just will, at times, suffer among the unjust. But they have always the comfort of faith in eventual deliverance and eternal blessing—"the just shall live by his faith."¹ Though the enemies of the Church may seem to triumph, yet against them all the Church will rise and spread, as a fire kindled into strength by a tempest; and "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD."² Though false creeds and vain doubts may seem ready to devour the Church, yet "the LORD is in His holy temple,"³ and against that holy temple of the Church, fortified by His presence, the malice of man can never really prevail.

The Evening Lesson is a psalm of irregular metre (Shigionoth),⁴ composed for use in the Temple. It seems to gather up the teaching which the prophet, by his questions, had drawn forth. It begins with a declaration of the glory of GOD, as witnessed in Teman (Mount Seir), and Paran (Mount Sinai),⁵ and then shows how He had interposed to save His people in Midian,⁶ in the war with Amalek,⁷ with references to the miracles at the Red Sea and the river Jordan.⁸ In the contemplation of past deliverances, Habakkuk gathers confidence, and the concluding verses declare the faith with which, by such thoughts, he was inspired. Though every worldly matter should seem to go against him, yet will he "rejoice in the LORD, and joy in the GOD

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 4;

² verse 14;

³ verse 20.

⁴ Evening Lesson, verse 1;

⁵ verse 3;

⁶ verse 7;

⁷ verse 11;

⁸ verse 8.

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of his salvation."¹ Such is the confidence that belongs to the true Christian, and which will support him amid all trials and temptations.

As long as we trust in our own strength, we can have no confidence ; directly we can from our heart acknowledge, "the LORD GOD is my strength,"² then may fear and anxiety cease. Those who abide under the shadow of His wing need fear no earthly ill. The alternative Lesson follows out the same teaching. The people of the LORD, though they suffer under His chastisements, are not to fear man, who may be made the instrument of His wrath. Troubles and trials are to produce only a more lively fear of GOD.³ In His good time they will find deliverance,⁴ as the Israelites from their captivity, "and none shall make them afraid."⁵ And even if on this earth peace is not to be found, yet has the Christian a sure hope of finding it at last in its perfection, there, where the Saviour has gone before, that home of the true Christian, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 18 ;

² verse 19.

³ Alt. Evening Lesson, verse 7 ;

⁴ verse 11, &c.

⁵ verse 13.



Saints' Days.



THE Church instructs us by example as well as by precept. On the festivals relating to our Blessed LORD, and their accompanying Sundays, she has furnished us with rules of holy living. The saints' days and other holydays show us how, by the power of the grace of GOD, these holy rules have been carried out in the lives of men of like passions with ourselves. When, therefore, on these days we call to mind, successively, the virtues of each particular saint or martyr, we adore, not the men who showed forth the good works, but Him Who wrought those good works in them. We "glorify GOD in them," and strive to "become followers of them, even as they also were of CHRIST."

From the earliest times, the Church has ever held sacred the memory of those who died for the faith of CHRIST. The days set apart to celebrate their death or martyrdom were called the days of their birth, and were observed with joy, not with sorrow. Christians rejoiced that one of their number should have been born again from a world of sin and suffering into a world of holiness and happiness. They praised GOD for having taken him out of the Church militant, to form a part of the Church triumphant.

When, in after ages, the number of saints and martyrs increased, and the number of holydays multiplied with them, it became necessary to put a limit to their observance. Our branch of the Church, therefore, only celebrates the lives of those who were the immediate followers of our Blessed LORD, and first preachers of his Gospel; the commemoration of all others being reserved for the united festival of All Saints. In addition to these, we have two days sacred to the blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of our LORD, on which we commemorate some mystery or doctrine referring to our LORD Himself: the festival of the Holy Innocents, who, being the first of those who glorified GOD by their deaths, are raised to the rank of martyrs; and the feast of St. Michael and All Angels, wherein we praise GOD for the blessings we receive from the ministration of angelic beings, and learn to imitate their purity and copy their perfect obedience.

Such are the festivals which the Church bids us observe in addition to those immediately relating to our LORD Himself; and on each of these holydays she provides a separate service for our instruction and improvement. The Epistle and Gospel usually supply us with part of the life, and sometimes a portion of the writings, of him whose memory we are celebrating. The Collects for the most part gather up the instruction which is to be drawn from them, while the Lessons are selected with a view to the guidance of those who are striving to follow in the steps of the holy saints of GOD.

Thus are the members of the Church invisible, even now permitted to influence and instruct their brethren of the Church militant upon earth. Like a great cloud of witnesses they compass us about.

to guide and encourage us in our Christian course. We who would tread in their steps, must lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, while, with them, we look unto JESUS, the author and finisher of their faith and ours. Thus may we be enabled so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of GOD's heavenly kingdom.



St. Andrew's Day.

(NOVEMBER 30.)

Epistle, Romans, x. 9.

Morning Lesson, Isaiah, liv. ;

St. John, i. 35-43.

Gospel, St. Matthew, iv. 18.

Evening Lesson, Isaiah, lxx. 1-17 ; St. John, xii. 20-42.

ST. ANDREW was the first disciple who came to CHRIST. His name stands therefore first in the "noble army" of saints and martyrs which the Church commemorates. Brought before us at the opening of Advent, he is, as it were, the first to proclaim that "we have found the Messiah,"¹ even CHRIST. The call of this Apostle to the service of our LORD is related in the Gospel for this day. The rest of his history is supplied by other portions of Holy Scripture and the earliest writings of the Christian Church.

It is in St. John's Gospel that we find the first mention of the Apostle St. Andrew. He was of Bethsaida,² a city of Galilee, son of Jonas, a fisherman of that town, and brother to Simon Peter.

¹ Second Morning Lesson, verse 41 ;

² verse 44.

Instructed by John the Baptist, of whom he was a disciple, he had learned from him to expect the coming of the Messiah. When, therefore, he heard the Baptist addressing our Blessed Saviour as "the Lamb of GOD Which taketh away the sin of the world," (St. John, i. 29,) St. Andrew was prepared to follow our LORD. He went in and abode with Him, and from henceforth was devoted to the faith of CHRIST. The first act of the newly converted disciple was to make his brother Simon a sharer in his privileges. He went to him to tell him that he had found the Messiah, the Saviour of the world;¹ then both together joined our LORD. It was not, however, until a year afterwards, that they were called by our Blessed Saviour to be His constant companions and attendants.

The occasion of their being called was this: While the two brothers were engaged in their usual trade of fishing on the sea of Galilee² (see also St. Luke, v. 1-11,) our LORD came to them, and by the miracle of the draught of fishes confirmed their faith in His greatness and divinity. Seeing their minds thus prepared, He proclaimed to them, that from henceforth they are to leave their humble calling, and to become fishers of the souls of men. At His word, they straightway left their nets and followed Him.

After this St. Andrew seems to have been constantly with our LORD. When certain Greeks sought to see JESUS, they first applied to Philip. Philip, unwilling to be alone in the work of introducing the strangers to his LORD, seeks the aid and counsel of his fellow-townsmen, Andrew,³ who shrinks not from the task of bringing men to JESUS.

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 41.

² Gospel, verse 18.

³ Second Evening Lesson, verses 21, 22.

The faith of the two is confirmed by the voice from heaven, which, in answer to the prayer of JESUS, glorifies His name.¹

St. Andrew was honoured by being admitted to the number of the twelve Apostles. With them he continued to teach and to preach during the lifetime of our LORD. (St. Mark, xiii. 3; St. John, xii. 22; St. John, vi. 8.) Three times during this period his name is mentioned with those of other Apostles, as in attendance upon his Divine Master. After the ascension of our Blessed Saviour he took his share in the work of Christianizing the world. The part of the globe in which it fell to his lot to labour was Scythia, an uncivilized tract of country far north of the Holy Land. Here he continued to preach for many years, undaunted by the fury of the barbarous inhabitants and the dangers to which he was exposed. In passing to and from this country, he also instructed in the faith the different provinces of Asia Minor and many parts of Greece. It was at Patræ, a town in the province of Achaia, that he met with his death. The number of converts which he had made excited the rage of the proconsul or governor of the province, by whose orders he was scourged and crucified; and that his death might be more lingering he was fastened to the cross with cords instead of nails. St. Andrew, however, gloried in his torments. On seeing the cross he saluted it with transports, rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for his Master's Name. Such was the life and death of this holy Apostle.

Having traced his history, we now come to learn from the services of this day what is the lesson we should draw from his example. In them St.

¹ Second Evening Lesson, verse 28.

Andrew's call and his ready obedience are the points set forth for our imitation. The Gospel relates the circumstances connected with them. The Epistle and Collect show us how to apply St. Andrew's example to ourselves.

That we have each individually, as well as in a body, been called by GOD, the Epistle plainly teaches. When the Jews, the first-called of GOD, were rejected on account of their disobedience and hardness of heart, the Gentiles were called in their stead. The same LORD, Who is "rich unto all that call upon Him,"¹ was willing that the Gentiles also should come to the knowledge of the faith. "But how should they call on Him in Whom they have not believed, and how should they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard, and how should they hear without a preacher?"²

To remove this difficulty GOD, in His mercy, provided preachers and ministers of the Gospel, "whose sound was to go out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."³ By the mouths of those holy men, as well as by their successors in the Christian Church, GOD has called us to the knowledge of His word. He has taught us to call on His Name, and has preached to us the Gospel of peace. Though no longer visibly present among us, our Blessed LORD still calls us by their means to believe in Him, to love Him, and to follow Him. From us, whom He has called unto Him in holy baptism, He therefore expects that we should give up ourselves obediently to follow His holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our life. Thus are all baptized Christians called, as St. Andrew was, to the service of their divine Lord and Master.

¹ Epistle, verse 12 ;

² verse 14 ;

³ verse 18.

By His holy word He has once called us, and by the dealings of His providence He still continues to plead with us: sometimes calling us afresh, and sometimes urging us on in the path which He has marked out for us. With us it remains to "follow Him without delay."¹ GOD may not indeed now call us to such a high employment as that which fell to the lot of this holy Apostle; but the same LORD Who pointed out to him the task of being "a fisher of men," also points out to us our daily tasks and duties, however humble they may be. He "calls" us to them; and it is by continuing in these duties, however trivial they may appear, that we shall be best obeying our Master's call. Sometimes, in this our daily path, GOD's holy will and commandments may differ from the voice of the world and our own inclination: sometimes, even in trifling things, we may have to choose between GOD and mammon. Then we may humbly believe that GOD is calling us on still higher. We must remember the example of the Apostle St. Andrew, and pray for grace to imitate it. We must leave the temptation which would hold us back, and follow Him without delay.

This was the course of the saints of GOD, and the principle which made them to overcome even unto death. Let us follow in their steps. Taking the Word of GOD for our guide, let us learn the precepts by which they lived, and then "go and do likewise;" feeling assured that He who "gave such grace unto His holy Apostle St. Andrew, that he readily obeyed the calling of His Son JESUS CHRIST," will likewise enable us, who have been called by His holy Word, to give up ourselves obediently to follow His holy will and command-

¹ Collect.

ments, and walk in the same all the days of our life.

We learn, then, on this day, how even the humblest and lowliest Christian may be following the footsteps of the most holy saints of GOD, if only he strive "to do his duty in that state of life to which it hath pleased God to call him."

The first Lessons of the day, chosen from the prophet Isaiah, speak of the prosperity and spread of the Church of CHRIST. St. Andrew was one of those chosen in the wisdom of God for the accomplishment of the prophecy. What comfort it must have been to those first preachers of the Gospel, to read the gracious promises of success uttered years before for the support of the rising and persecuted Church. "In a little wrath I hid my face, but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy."¹ What strength to those who went forth to teach the truth as it is in JESUS, to know that their labour would not be in vain. "All thy children shall be taught of the LORD."² "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper."³ And this is true of the Church still. Though by her shortcomings she may incur the wrath of GOD, and receive punishment in calamity and divisions, yet is the everlasting kindness extended towards her. St. Andrew heard the call of the LORD, and he obeyed unhesitatingly, but some there are who will not listen when GOD calls them. "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts."⁴ For such, GOD has but words of terrible warning. "I will number you

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 8.

² First Morning Lesson, verse 13 ;

³ verse 17.

⁴ First Evening Lesson, verse 2.

to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter."¹ "My servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart."² Let us rather follow the example of the saint set before us. We are called to be members of CHRIST, let us walk as His disciples, ready, daily, to take up our Cross and follow Him. It may be a difficult life; the heavenward path is narrow, but GOD is ready to aid all who obey His call. "While they are yet speaking," He says, "I will hear."³ Almighty GOD, grant to us that we—like St. Andrew—being called by Thy Holy Word, may forthwith give up ourselves obediently to fulfil Thy holy commandments.



St. Thomas the Apostle.

(DECEMBER 21.)

Epistle, Ephesians, ii. 19. *Morning Lessons*, Job, xlii. 1-7;

St. John, xx. 19-24.

Gospel, St. John, xx. 24. *Evening Lessons*, Isaiah, xxxv. ;

St. John, xiv. 1-8.

ST. THOMAS, whom we commemorate to-day, was one of the twelve Apostles. Of his early life very little is known. His name, "Thomas," as well as that of "Didymus," by which he was sometimes called, signifies, each in its respective language, "a twin." He was a Jew, and probably, like St. Peter, a fisherman of Galilee. The first mention which Holy Scripture makes of him (after his call to the apostolate) gives an instance of his zeal and devotion. Our Blessed

¹ First Evening Lesson, verse 12 ;

² verse 14 ;

³ verse 24.

LORD desired to return into Judea, that He might raise Lazarus from the dead. The disciples murmured, knowing that the Jews sought to slay JESUS. But when our LORD appeared firm in His purpose, St. Thomas is the first who declares himself willing to share his Master's danger. "Let us also go," he says, "that we may die with Him." (St. John, xi. 16.) It would seem that St. Thomas's character was that of a man slow to ascertain the right path, but who, having found it out, would pursue it with energy and courage. Thus in our LORD's discourse after the Last Supper, when He declares that they know whither He is going, and the way (of which He had so often spoken before), St. Thomas is the one boldly to declare his difficulty; "We know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" He speaks less in faithlessness than in an earnest desire to be instructed, and, though our LORD never answered faithless questions, He answers St. Thomas, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."¹

Again, on the evening after the Resurrection, our LORD appeared to His disciples suddenly as they were seated in the upper room.² They knew Him and rejoiced when they were made certain of the reality of His appearance by seeing in His body the marks of His suffering.³ But St. Thomas was not with them, and with characteristic caution he refused to believe what they told him.⁴ A week after, the disciples were again gathered together in the same place, and St. Thomas with them. Our LORD again appeared to them, and, though he rebuked with tenderness the sloth of

¹ Second Evening Lesson, verses 5, 6.

² Second Morning Lesson, verse 19;

³ verse 20.

⁴ Gospel, verse 25.

His Apostle's faith,¹ He granted to him the proof he had so earnestly desired.² The effect is instantaneous, and St. Thomas at once declares Him to be his LORD and his GOD.³ Thus may we learn the tenderness of our LORD's dealings with those who have difficulties in faith; but let us not fail to observe the intensity and depth of faith in the Apostle when once convinced; many may find it hard to believe, few are so ready as St. Thomas boldly to confess their faith when at last they have learnt it.

St. Thomas is again found amongst the other Apostles at the subsequent appearance of the risen Saviour, at the sea of Tiberias (St. John, xxi. 1, 2); and, after the ascension, we read of him as engaged in casting the lot which was to decide the election of St. Matthias. (Acts, i. 13.) He preached in the eastern countries of Parthia, Media, and Persia, and at length came to India, where he received the crown of martyrdom at the hands of the Brahmins, the priests of the false religion of the Indian nation. Some men of this profession, fearing the influence of his teaching upon their own sect, assaulted and killed him whilst he was engaged in prayer. This latter country still bears some traces of the holy labours of this Apostle. A body of Christians still exists, who, from the name of St. Thomas which they bear, and the purity of their faith which, in a great measure, they still retain, are supposed to be a Church originally planted by him.

Thus was St. Thomas enabled to take his part in the glorious spread of the Church of CHRIST upon earth, of which the prophet Isaiah speaks in the Evening Lesson. St. Thomas himself had

¹ Gospel, verse 29; ² verse 27; ³ verse 28.

experienced that strengthening power¹ which his hesitating disposition required. He had come to the true "highway"² of faith, and bravely he walked along it, rejoicing to lead others to the comfort he himself had found. From the beginning he was brave, but now he had found a true object for his bravery, and he was ready indeed to die with, and for, his Master, his GOD, by Whom he had been redeemed; through Whom he had now the hope of obtaining joy and gladness after the sorrow and sighing of a life of persecution.³

In the Morning Lesson, Job's declaration of faith is read to us, as a parallel to that of St. Thomas. Job's faith had been severely tried in his terrible calamities, but, though he had wavered, his faith was true and earnest, and it brought him, by the grace of GOD, through all his trials. He confesses his own ignorance, GOD's omniscience.⁴ He acknowledges that he has heard the warning voice of GOD in his own conscience and in the words of his own friends, and now for his comfort he sees⁵ and realizes the hand of GOD in all.

He had indeed been tempted, as St. Thomas, to doubt, but he returned to his faith with redoubled earnestness, and at last saw plainly in Him Who afflicted, as well as in Him Who blessed, his LORD and his GOD. It was, as the Collect tells us, "for the more confirmation of the faith,"⁶ that the holy Apostle St. Thomas was suffered to doubt; and so indeed has it proved. The words⁷ with which he replied to the rebuke of our Saviour not only bear witness to the truth of the resurrection, but remain in all ages of the Christian Church a stand-

¹ First Evening Lesson, verse 3;

² verse 8;

³ verses 9, 10.

⁴ First Morning Lesson, verses 2, 3;

⁵ verse 5.

⁶ Collect.

⁷ Gospel, verse 28.

ing testimony to the doctrine of our Blessed LORD's divinity. This point of doctrine is the foundation of all Christianity, the very root and ground-work of all true religion: "for the right faith is, that we believe and confess that our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Son of GOD, is GOD and Man." (Athanasian Creed.) So the Epistle for this day teaches us. The Church or Body of CHRIST, visible as well as invisible, is here represented as being one great building, of which the Apostles are styled the foundations;¹ because they were as the first stones, upon which others were to be reared up. But of this building, CHRIST, our Divine LORD and Master, is alone the corner-stone;¹ for from Him alone it is that we derive our support and safety. By uniting His divine to our human nature, He has become to us justification, sanctification, and redemption; and by the strength of this, His divine power, He gathers us together, makes us grow up an holy temple unto Himself.

And it is not without a meaning that this truth is brought before us at a time when we are about to commemorate our Blessed LORD's nativity. When we draw near to celebrate our Saviour's life upon earth, it must ever be with reverent thoughts of His divinity. To little purpose should we commemorate the several acts of His most holy life and death, unless we believed that He Who thus suffered for us in the flesh, is also "our LORD and our GOD."² Therefore does the Church take this opportunity of teaching us, and that by the mouth of the holy Apostle St. Thomas, to "believe perfectly and without all doubt" in our LORD JESUS CHRIST.³

¹ Epistle, verse 20.

² Gospel, verse 28.

³ Collect.

St. Stephen's Day.

(DECEMBER 26.)

For the Epistle, Acts, vii. 55. *Morning Lessons*, Genesis, iv.

1-11 ; Acts, vi.

Gospel, St. Matthew, xxiii. *Evening Lessons*, 2 Chroni-
cles, xxiv. 15-23 ; Acts, viii.

34.

1-9.

ST. STEPHEN was the first martyr. His death was the first fruits of that faith which was brought into the world by the incarnation of our Blessed LORD and Saviour. His day, therefore, follows that of the nativity ; and next to him, we commemorate in order two other days dedicated to martyrs. Thus,—St. Stephen, the martyr in will and deed ; St. John, the martyr in will though not in deed ; and the Holy Innocents, who were martyrs in deed only, but not in will,—all wait on Him Who was the King of martyrs. Of these, St. Stephen is the one whom we commemorate to-day.

His history, related to us in the early part of the Acts of the Apostles, forms the subject of the second Proper Lessons and of the Epistle for this day. From it we gather the following facts. St. Stephen was one of those seven men whom the Apostles appointed to the office of deacon, in order to assist them in the ministry of the Church. The duties of this office included the distribution of alms to the faithful, and the baptism of new converts, as well as the preaching of the word. All these St. Stephen fulfilled with the zeal and devotion of one

who was "full of faith and of the HOLY GHOST,"¹ and in the discharge of them he met with his death. The wisdom and power with which he preached the Christian faith excited the anger and jealousy of the leaders of the Jewish synagogues, who accused him of speaking blasphemous words against Moses and against the law.² St. Stephen, assisted by direct and visible communications from GOD, refutes this charge. Out of those very Scriptures which they had used as a handle against him, he proves that CHRIST, Whom he preached to them, "came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it."

CHRIST's very sufferings proved Him to be the "Holy One and the Just," of Whom their fathers spake; and they, by inflicting those sufferings, had themselves unconsciously borne witness to the prophecies concerning Him. They had "fulfilled them in condemning Him." It was at this point of St. Stephen's argument, that the rage of his enemies broke loose against him. Convicted by their own consciences, they felt the truth of his words and the wickedness of their own conduct.

But truth, falling upon hardened and impenitent hearts, often only leads men on to greater sin. And so it was in this case. Nothing less would satisfy the fury of those wicked men than the death of him who had thus exposed their crime. They rushed upon him, and having cast him out of the city,³ they proceeded to stone him to death; that being the manner in which blasphemy was punished according to the law. After the example of his Divine Master, he prayed for his murderers, and when he had so done, he "fell asleep."⁴

¹ Second Morning Lesson, verse 5;

² verses 11, 13,

³ Epistle, verse 58;

⁴ verse 60.

But he who was first called upon to shed his blood for the sake of the true faith, as it is in JESUS, was strengthened by a miraculous vision of the King of martyrs. He saw heaven opened, and JESUS standing at GOD's right hand¹ to succour him in his hour of trial. The Collect teaches us how a like consolation may be vouchsafed even to ourselves. Our sufferings here upon earth for the testimony of CHRIST's truth, may not indeed be as severe as those of St. Stephen. We may not be called upon to lay down our lives for His sake ; but having taken upon ourselves the Cross of CHRIST, we must all in some way or other bear witness to the faith of CHRIST.

Others, who have "not so learned CHRIST" as we have, may unjustly accuse and find fault with us. They may speak evil of that way in which we live, and use without reverence that holy Name which we have been taught to love. We may "do well and suffer for it," even at the hands of those who call themselves brethren. By them our words and actions may be misconstrued, and our tempers tried. Such trials, we see, may be the lot of even the humblest and youngest of CHRIST's little ones. He alone knows to which of them we may be called, and what portion of them we may have to bear. But when He puts them upon us, He gives us, as He did to St. Stephen, the consolations necessary to support us under them. Though we should not now see heaven opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of GOD, yet heaven has been as clearly revealed to our faith, as it was to the bodily senses of St. Stephen.

In St. Stephen, the first martyr, began the fulfilment of our Saviour's prophecy which we read in

¹ Epistle, verse 55.

the Gospel for the day. He was the first among the train of prophets, and wise men, and scribes, whom the Jews, after the coming of CHRIST, as their fathers did before it, were to scourge, and kill, and crucify ; and whose blood was so soon to be visited upon their church and nation.

The First Lessons give us the history of the two martyrdoms in the Old Testament referred to by our LORD in the Gospel. Abel fell a victim to the jealousy of his brother, when his sacrifice, offered in obedience to Divine command, was accepted, while that of Cain was rejected.¹ A type of St. Stephen, inasmuch as St. Stephen fell a victim to the jealousy of his brother Jews when they saw "his face as it had been the face of an angel," and heard his joyful declaration of his heavenly vision, which would seem to prove his acceptableness in the sight of GOD.

Zechariah fell a victim to the fury of the wicked Israelites when they heard his denunciation of their evil ways ;² a type again of St. Stephen, slain because he dared boldly to accuse their wickedness in slaying the "Just One," in crucifying their LORD. But the blood of martyrs is the nourishment of the Church, and the martyrdom of St. Stephen did but stimulate the zeal and encourage the bravery of the new Christians. His body was devoutly buried, with lamentation, indeed,³ for the loss of so holy a member of the Church, but with joy that GOD had been pleased so openly to show His sympathy with the sufferings of His people.

Persecution did not now cease, but that very fact caused the spread of the true faith, for the believers

¹ First Morning Lesson, verses 4, 5.

² First Evening Lesson, verses 20, 21.

³ Second Evening Lesson, verse 2.

were scattered over the length and breadth of Palestine, carrying with them everywhere the gospel of peace.¹

May we learn, then, from this day's commemoration, to be bold and outspoken in our faith, not fearing what man can do unto us, for JESUS still stands at the right hand of GOD, ready now, as then, to hear our prayers and extend His sympathizing aid to us in all our difficulties. Let us not be afraid if persecution and evil speaking against CHRIST's people may seem to abound, but be sure that, in GOD's good time, such troubles will but add to the glory of His Church. In all our sufferings the Blessed JESUS stands at the right hand of GOD to succour us.

In these thoughts we find our encouragement. We know that when the house of this earthly tabernacle is dissolved, we have a "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," and that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." All our trials, afflictions, and persecutions will appear as nothing when we look forward to the hope which is laid up for us in heaven; for "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Thus may the example of the great martyr St. Stephen be profitable to us even in our daily lives. By it, he, being dead, yet speaketh; and for it, we, who still live, have reason to praise him who is already dead, more than the living which are yet alive.

¹ Second Evening Lesson, verse 4.

St. John the Evangelist's Day.

(DECEMBER 27.)

- Epistle*, 1 St. John, i. 1. *Morning Lessons*, Exodus, xxxiii. 9; St. John, xiii. 23-36.
Gospel, St. John, xxi. 19. *Evening Lessons*, Isaiah, vi.; Revelation, i.

ST. JOHN, the Apostle and Evangelist whom we commemorate to-day, was the disciple "whom JESUS loved."¹ He it was who leaned on JESUS' bosom at the Last Supper, and seems to have comprehended most fully the deep meaning of the new commandment then given by the LORD to His disciples, "Love one another."² Love or charity is the principle which his writings chiefly inculcate. He speaks to us of the love of GOD; and teaches us—almost in the very words of his beloved Master—that "if GOD so loved us" as to send His Son to be the propitiation of our sins, "we ought also to love one another." (1 St. John, iv. 11.) And by his life, no less than by his words, St. John sets forth this divine doctrine. He was born of parents, who, from his youth up, would most probably have trained him in the love of CHRIST. His father Zebedee was in attendance on our LORD, during the early part of His ministry; and Salome, his mother, was amongst those holy women who watched our Saviour at the sepulchre. When St. John first entered the immediate service of his Master is not known; but from the time of his becoming a disciple, he appears to

Second Morning Lesson, verse 23; ² verse 34.

have been honoured with our LORD's intimate confidence: St. John was one of the three specially chosen to be a witness of the transfiguration, and of the raising of Jairus' daughter; he was the disciple who lay on JESUS' bosom at the Last Supper; he was with Him in His agony in the garden, and watched Him expiring on the Cross. It was to the care of St. John that our LORD committed His Mother, the Blessed Virgin, when in His dying moments He beheld her, and "the disciple standing by whom He loved." (St. John, xix. 26.) After the Resurrection, he is found with his brother St. James and others of the Apostles, on the shores of the sea of Tiberias, witnessing the miracle of their Divine Master, and listening to His words. He is the subject of the conversation which at this time took place between our LORD and the Apostle St. Peter.¹ This conversation, which is recorded in the Gospel for the day, refers to the future life and death of St. John. The lot of this beloved disciple was not like that of the other Apostles, to die a violent death for the faith, but to live on, and tarry the LORD's pleasure. And so we learn from him something of the nature of true devotion, which is, not to choose for ourselves as to life or death, but to wait patiently the LORD's good time. The faithful servant of CHRIST will leave all in His hands, knowing that for those who love GOD "to live is CHRIST, to die is gain."

After the ascension of our Saviour, St. John abated nothing of his religious love and devotion. Holy Scripture tells us of his labours in the Christian Church; of the wonderful miracles and conversions which he, in conjunction with St. Peter, wrought in CHRIST's Name; and of the stripes, per-

¹ Gospel, verse 21, &c.

secutions, and imprisonments which he, in company with that same Apostle, underwent for CHRIST'S sake.

History, taking up the narrative, speaks of his continued labours for the Christian faith, and of the sufferings which he in consequence underwent at the hand of Domitian, the Roman Emperor, by whose orders he was placed in a cauldron of boiling oil. But it was not GOD'S will that he should die thus. His martyrdom was to be in will, not in deed. He was brought to suffer, but not to die for CHRIST'S sake. The hand of GOD therefore rescued him from this danger and preserved his body unharmed from the scalding liquid. Banishment was then substituted for torment, and by the same Emperor he was for some years exiled to the isle of Patmos. Before his death, however, he was freed from this punishment likewise ; and returning to Ephesus, a town where he had formerly preached, he expired peaceably in a good old age, and his last breath was expended in calling upon the disciples "to love one another."

But while, in St. John's character, we thus trace the nature of Divine love, we learn also something of its blessed effects. It was St. John, the Apostle of Love, who was allowed more than any other to penetrate the mysteries of Divine truth ; as if to teach us, that to Love, revelations of things Divine are made, which are refused even to Faith and Knowledge. St. John, like the eagle used for his emblem, seems to have been constantly soaring up to heaven in holy contemplation. He possessed the "charity which edifieth," rather than the "knowledge which puffeth up," and so he obtained a nearer insight into the heavenly world. During his banishment in the isle of Patmos, GOD vouch-

safed to reveal to him "the things which must shortly come to pass."¹ The disciple "whom JESUS loved" was permitted to see the LORD, whom he had faithfully served during His life of humility, in His kingdom of glory.² Having received a message to the seven Churches already established, he was told to write, for the instruction of the people of GOD upon earth, the vision of the future of the world then revealed to his sight.³ The revelation then made to the Apostle is in many points similar to that accorded to the prophet Isaiah, and alluded to in the First Evening Lesson. Both saw the LORD in His glory, both were struck with terror at the sense of their own unworthiness in the presence of the "Holy, Holy, Holy, LORD of Hosts;"⁴ and while the prophet is sanctified through the agency of an angel, the Apostle is raised from his swoon of terror by the right hand of the Holy Son Himself, his beloved Master. From the First Morning Lesson we learn how GOD delighted to honour the great lawgiver, Moses, by a vision (though apparently a less perfect one than that accorded to the Prophet and Apostle) of His glory.⁵ Such glorious visions, it is true, are no longer accorded unto men. Since the gift of the Holy Spirit has been so widely diffused, through the Church's sacraments, GOD has seen fit to withhold revelations which He saw necessary for the less supported faith of His people of old. But still it is true that they who most, like St. John, cultivate the spirit of Christian charity and love, who dwell closest to their LORD in life, leaning, as it were, on His bosom, who learn to love Him by

¹ Second Evening Lesson, verse 1; ² verse 12, &c.;

³ verses 11, 19. ⁴ First Evening Lesson, verses 3, 5.

⁵ First Morning Lesson, verse 19.

the contemplation of His love, are able most nearly to penetrate the clouds of mystery which surround His throne of glory, and to feel and understand, while yet on earth, a portion at least of the peace and bliss and glory of heaven.

The contemplation of this life of love seems to come most appropriately at Christmas-tide, when, in obedience to the Church's cycle of teaching, we are beginning to learn the great work of redeeming love from its very beginning in the Bethlehem stable. St. John, in the Epistle, gives us his witness to the truth of the Incarnation,¹ and he speaks in rapturous words of the fellowship in JESUS CHRIST thus granted to us.² He alludes also to the impossibility of those who walk unworthily of their Saviour claiming that fellowship, yet almost in the same breath, lovingly anxious to comfort the desponding Christian, he tells of the precious blood, shed to wash away our unworthiness,³ to cleanse us from the sins which render our lives a disgrace to the holy fellowship we claim. May we, as members of CHRIST'S Holy Church, have grace to learn both from the example and the doctrine of St. John, and to walk in the light of GOD'S truth thus revealed to us, so that at length we may—as we believe he will—attain to the light of everlasting life.

¹ Epistle, verse 1 ;

² verse 3 ;

³ verse 7.



The Innocents' Day.

(DECEMBER 28.)

For the Epistle, Revelation, Morning Lesson, Jeremiah,
 xiv. 1. xxx. 1-18.
Gospel, St. Matthew, ii. 13. Evening Lesson, Baruch, iv.
21-31.

EXT in order to the festivals of St. Stephen and St. John, we commemorate that of the holy Innocents. The little babes, who unconsciously yielded up their lives for the Saviour, have a place assigned to them with him who died willingly, and with him who was willing to die for CHRIST's sake. Thus Martyrdom, Love, and Innocence unite to glorify the Redeemer of mankind.

The Gospel for the day relates the circumstances which gave rise to the murder of these infant martyrs. Herod, King of Judea, hearing that One would shortly be born Who should be called "King of the Jews," feared for his throne and kingdom. Bethlehem being the reported birth-place of this infant rival, he ordered the destruction of the children of that town, from two years old and under. But this order, coming from man alone, could not affect the eternal decrees of GOD. An angel from heaven forewarned the parents of our Blessed Saviour of the approaching danger, and the Son of GOD was saved by flight. Thus, by the over-ruling providence of GOD, He, Whom alone Herod sought to kill, was the only One saved from destruction, while all the other Bethlehemite infants were put to the edge of the sword.

dren, it extends to all who would follow the precept of our LORD and Master, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of GOD as a little child, he shall not enter therein." (St. Mark, x. 15.) The purity, the simple faith, the unquestioning obedience, of the little infant confiding in its mother's love, is to be the pattern of the Christian man in his dealings with his Heavenly Father. If we thus share the purity of innocents, we may also hope to share their blessedness. May GOD give us grace, "by the innocency of our lives and the constancy of our faith even unto death, to glorify His holy Name" ¹ so that redeemed, as were the holy Innocents, by the Blood of the Lamb, we may for His sake be found guiltless before GOD, and, with them, learn to sing the new song, which no man can learn but the hundred and forty and four thousand which are before the throne in heaven. ²



The Conversion of St. Paul.

(JANUARY 25.)

For the Epistle, Acts, ix. 1. *Morning Lessons*, Isaiah, xlix. 1-13; Galatians, i. 11.
Gospel, St. Matthew, xix. *Evening Lessons*, Jeremiah, i. 1-11; Acts, xxvi. 1-21.

 HE chief feature in St. Paul's history is his conversion. This, therefore, is the subject which the Church brings before us on the day sacred to his memory. Instead of commemorating, according to her practice on other saints' days, the birth or death of this great Apostle, she

¹ Collect.

² Epistle, verse 3.

remembers his conversion as the event of his life by which GOD's grace was most magnified, and our salvation most advanced.

The whole history of this great miracle is related to us in those portions of Scripture selected for the Epistle and Second Lessons of the day; and the other parts of the service teach us how to make it profitable to ourselves.

St. Paul, originally called Saul, was by birth and education a Jew, and of the Pharisees, one of their strictest sects. Born of Jewish parents, and brought up at Jerusalem under Gamaliel, he had been carefully instructed in the law of his fathers, and was "zealous towards GOD" in that faith in which he had been trained. He served JEHOVAH, but had not yet learned to know and to adore the Messiah, JESUS CHRIST; therefore, he thought he "ought to do many things contrary to the Name of JESUS of Nazareth."¹ Thus we find him taking part in the murder of St. Stephen, and then, strengthened by legal authority, we see him setting forth to persecute and destroy the followers of CHRIST in Damascus. (Acts, viii. ix.) But the prayer of the first Christian martyr had gone up before the throne of GOD, and this very Saul was its first fruits. GOD looked down from heaven, and had mercy upon him because he sinned "ignorantly in unbelief." (1 Tim. i. 13.) By a sudden and miraculous vision from heaven, the LORD stops his mistaken course,² shows unto him the good and the right way, and converts him at once from an enemy into a devoted servant and follower of CHRIST. From Damascus, the scene of his conversion, it appears that St. Paul went immediately to prepare himself for the task imposed

¹ Second Evening Lesson, verse 9. ² Epistle, verse 3.

upon him, in the solitude of the Arabian desert.¹ There, where the law had been delivered to his people from heaven, where Israel had wandered forty years in punishment of their disobedience, and where the zealot Elijah had been comforted, strengthened, and sent back to his forsaken work, the newly called Apostle fitted himself, and was fitted of GOD, for the discharge of his ministry; there he received the revelations of the life and work of his Saviour, which he afterwards gratefully refers to, especially with regard to the Holy Communion.

After a long time thus spent in preparation he returned to Damascus, and from henceforth the zeal, earnestness, and fervour which he had expended in the cause of error were devoted to the cause of truth, and he became a preacher of the "faith which once he destroyed."² Neither the false accusations of former associates, nor the suspicions of his new brethren, could draw him from the straight and narrow path which was marked out for him. He preached the word in season and out of season, in labours, and stripes, and imprisonments, in weariness, perils, and watchings. None of these things moved him, neither counted he his life dear unto himself. He was never ashamed of his life, but ever ready to proclaim his former error, and to magnify GOD's mercy to him in his conversion. Boldly he declares before the king Agrippa all the circumstances of that wondrous event, adding also his commission to preach the faith to the Gentiles, teaching them not only "to repent," but, like himself, "to do works meet for repentance."³ So, boldly, he went on his way, carrying out the will of his Master, and spreading far and

¹ Second Morning Lesson, verse 17; ² verse 23.

³ Second Evening Lesson, verse 20.

wide the knowledge of His Name, until at last he was called upon to grasp the martyr's crown, and cheerfully laid down his life for CHRIST's sake, being beheaded at Rome, by the order of the Emperor Nero, in the year A.D. 67.

Thus by the wonderful power of the grace of GOD, Saul, the Jewish persecutor, was changed into the Christian martyr and Apostle St. Paul. He, who was before "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," became "a pattern to them which should hereafter believe." (1 Tim. i. 13, 16.) As a chosen vessel of GOD, to him was entrusted the important task of bearing witness before "Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel."¹ He was the chosen means whereby the prophecy of Isaiah was to be accomplished, and CHRIST to become "a light to the Gentiles."² Those who were not numbered among the chosen of GOD were to be called into the fold by his ministration, and the great highway³ of GOD—the Church—was by his means to be carried through the nations then plunged in the darkness of heathenism. The commission of St. Paul was thus very similar to that of Jeremiah. He was set over the nations "to destroy and throw down" the miseries of idolatry and superstition, "to plant and to build" the Church of CHRIST.⁴ And both Apostle and Prophet were but instruments—chosen vessels—in the hand of GOD for His own great work of mercy. He "put words" into their mouths,⁵ He sanctified them specially for the ministry which in no wise could they have carried out, of their own strength, or by their own device.

In this history we learn to adore the mighty

¹ Epistle, verse 15.

² First Morning Lesson, verse 6;

³ verse 11.

⁴ First Evening Lesson, verse 10;

⁵ verse 9.

power of GOD's grace, and to realize the truth of our Saviour's words, when He tells us in this day's Gospel that "many that are first shall be last ; and the last shall be first."¹ These words were originally spoken, as is supposed, with reference to the twelve Apostles, and the thrones prepared for them in heaven ; but the meaning which they contain may be applicable to all, both in their time and ours. They teach us that our eternal safety depends not so much on the light we possess as on the measure in which we act up to it. St. Paul, the very "least of all saints," became "not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles," (Eph. iii. 8 ; 2 Cor. xi. 5,) while we, who are amongst the first in light and privileges, may be last in faith and obedience. This, therefore, is the point to which the Church would lead us on this day. While she leaves us to adore in silence the wonderful ways of GOD, with regard to those who, like the Jewish persecutor Saul, have not received the light, she gathers from this festival the lesson most profitable to our own souls. Through the preaching of the holy Apostle St. Paul, we have received "the light of the Gospel,"² which he, in his days of error, had not. As the light from heaven shone upon the persecuting fanatic rendering him blind to the world, but opening his eyes to the mysteries of salvation, so may the light of his after-example, and teaching inspired from above, shine brightly upon us to "open our eyes, to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto GOD."³ Such being the benefits brought to us by the conversion of St. Paul, let us strive to "show forth our thankfulness for the same,"⁴ in the way

¹ Gospel, verse 30.² Second Evening Lesson, verse 18.³ Collect.⁴ Collect.

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the Church would teach us. While "we have the light, let us walk as children of the light, lest darkness come upon us;" for "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."



The Presentation of Christ in the Temple,

COMMONLY CALLED

The Purification of St. Mary the Virgin.

(FEBRUARY 2.)

For the Epistle, Malachi, iii. 1. Morning Lesson, Exodus,
xiii. 1-17.

Gospel, St. Luke, ii. 22. Evening Lesson, Haggai,
ii. 1-10.

 HIS season of the year constantly brings to our minds the union of the divine and human natures in our blessed Saviour JESUS CHRIST. Christmas and Epiphany have set Him before us as "GOD, of the substance of His Father, begotten before the world; and Man, of the substance of His Mother, born in the world." So also on this day: as a little Child, born of Jewish parents, He is presented in the temple to fulfil the custom of the law: as GOD, the faithful there worship and adore Him; they see in this His simple action the fulfilment of their hopes, and the accomplishment of a glorious prophecy.

A reference to the Jewish law will teach us the occasion of this day's festival. GOD, as we know from the Old Testament history, had exempted the first-born of the Israelites from the destruction,

which at the time of their deliverance out of Egypt He had brought upon the first-born of the Egyptians. In remembrance, therefore, of this His great mercy, He had commanded that the first-born amongst the Israelites, both man and beast, should be dedicated to Himself.¹ Even though afterwards the Levites were taken as GOD's own possession instead of the first-born, (Numbers, iii. 12,) yet still the first-born continued to be solemnly presented to GOD in the temple at a certain time after their birth, together with a sum of money for their redemption; (Numbers, xviii. 16;) on this occasion, it was also customary for the mother to offer the usual sacrifices for the ceremony of her purification. No such ceremony, indeed, was required after the birth of Him Who knew no sin; yet as CHRIST our Saviour came to fulfil all righteousness, so His mother Mary (when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished) came to offer the usual sacrifices of a pair of turtle-doves, and two young pigeons, at which time our LORD Himself was presented in the temple in substance of our flesh.²

Such were the circumstances which drew together the holy group whose assemblage in the temple is described in the Gospel for the day. To ordinary eyes there would appear in them nothing more than would occur at the birth of any Jewish infant; but there were those who "looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Simeon, a just and devout man, waited for the consolation of Israel, and Anna, the aged prophetess, departed not from the temple, but served GOD in fastings and prayers night and day. Their eyes were opened to discern the wondrous things of GOD. It was their privi-

¹ Morning Lesson, verses 12-15. ² Gospel, verses 22-24.

lege, as it is ours also, to behold in this humble Child the great and mighty GOD, and to see in the events of this day, how those words spoken by the prophet Malachi began to be fulfilled.¹ The LORD had come to His temple, and that suddenly. He was come to purify and refine the hearts of men by the preaching of His doctrine and the power of His grace.

Standing in the temple, which had been rebuilt by Zerubbabel, they now could comprehend the meaning of the prophet Haggai, who had rebuked the people when they wept over the temple which seemed in their eyes less glorious than that of Solomon. The inspired prophet had foreseen this time in the far distance, when "the desire of all nations should come,"² and by His own personal incarnate Presence in the temple should render it more glorious even than the temple of Solomon filled with the cloud of the Shechinah. "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of Hosts : and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of Hosts."³ And this prophecy was now fulfilled, when, in His mother's arms, the Prince of Peace was carried into His Father's House. He came indeed to bring peace—the peace of pardon through the shedding of His precious Blood—but only to those who would receive and acknowledge Him as the Son of GOD. Thus Simeon declared Him to be set for the fall and also the rising again of many in Israel."⁴ The fall of those who are scandalized by the lowliness of His humanity ; the rising of those who acknowledge the truth of GOD's promises in Him, and adore the glory of His Divinity.

¹ Epistle, verse 1.
² verse 9.

³ Evening Lesson, verse 7 ;
⁴ Gospel, verse 34.

Well might Simeon be ready to depart in peace, now that he had welcomed the Saviour of the world, and seen the LORD'S CHRIST !¹

We see that in this action of our LORD, there is a higher and deeper meaning than the mere fulfilment of the outward law. To understand this meaning, and how to profit by it, we must again refer to the law of Moses for our instruction. The deliverance of the Israelites was to be obtained by the offering of the first-born ; so was also that of Christians, the Israelites of GOD, of which the other deliverance was but a type. CHRIST, the first-born among many brethren, "is He Who has performed this work for us." In this, as in all other things, He has "fulfilled the law for us," and redeemed us from its curse. Of this, His presentation this day in the temple is to us a pledge. By it we are assured, that we who have a part in the benefits of CHRIST'S Blood, need no longer be redeemed with contemptible things, as silver and gold. (1 St. Peter, i. 18.) Of us, it is required rather that we should offer up ourselves, our bodies, souls, and spirits, a lively sacrifice unto Him, purifying ourselves even as He is pure.

This is the practical lesson which the Church would draw from the events of this day. Our hearts are now as temples in which CHRIST makes His abode. He, Who was this day presented in the temple in substance of our flesh, condescends to dwell in us by faith, except we be reprobates. (2 Cor. xiii. 5.) Our aim, then, should be to keep these temples holy, so that the LORD may always there inhabit. Like Simeon and Anna, and the Blessed Virgin Mary, we must wait on the LORD continually in His temple and in His ordinances,

¹ Gospel, verses 26, 29.

as not knowing at what hour He may come. As His first coming was "suddenly, in an instant," so also shall His second be; and as at His first coming, the two or three gathered together in the temple find the Saviour, while the careless world miss Him, so also shall it be again. From this thought may we take warning. May we learn from it the danger of neglecting any service or ordinance in which CHRIST is present, for by so doing we may miss the privilege which Simeon and Anna found. Still following the teaching of the Church on this day, may we be led so to pray, and watch, and purify ourselves, that, however sudden His return may be, we may with pure and clean hearts be presented unto Him,¹ in His holy temple above; for to the pure in heart it is promised that "they shall see GOD."



St. Matthias's Day.

(FEBRUARY 24.)

For the Epistle, Acts, i. 15. Morning Lesson, 1 Samuel,
ii. 27-36.
Gospel, St. Matthew, xi. 25. Evening Lesson, Isaiah, xxii.
15.

ST. MATTHIAS was the Apostle appointed to fill the place of the traitor Judas. On this day we commemorate the fall as well as the election of an Apostle, and we draw from these events a lesson and a warning.

Of the early history of St. Matthias very little is

¹ Collect.

known, but he is generally supposed to have been one of the seventy disciples. Holy Scripture first brings him before us in that portion of the Acts which is read to us to-day. In this passage it is related how he came to be called to the vacant apostolate, and how GOD chose him to Himself by lot.¹ After the descent of the HOLY GHOST on the day of Pentecost, St. Matthias, like the other Apostles, had his portion of labour assigned to him, and after diligently preaching the word in the eastern provinces, he suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia, where he is believed to have died on a cross. St. Matthias, then, gained the crown which Judas by his transgression lost. This is the point to which the services for this day would turn our thoughts. The Collect reminds us that it was "in the room of the traitor Judas that St. Matthias was called to be of the number of the twelve Apostles," and the Scripture read as the Epistle tells us how it came to pass. But to enter into the circumstances of this event, we must call to mind the manner in which our LORD has ordained and constituted His Church. Our Blessed Saviour, during the time of His ministry, had called unto Him twelve disciples whom He named Apostles. These did CHRIST ordain to be with Him and to preach the Gospel; and, at His ascension, He left them all power in heaven and in earth to teach and baptize all nations, promising to be with them always even unto the end of the world. (St. Matthew, xxviii. 18-20.) The power which the Apostles received was not however to die with themselves. They were to commit it unto faithful men, who should be able to teach others also. (2 Tim. ii. 2.) Such are the means which GOD has chosen to plant and keep alive

¹ Epistle, verses 24-26.

amongst ourselves up to the present time the truths of the Gospel, and the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. As the Church of Israel was composed of twelve tribes, and headed by twelve patriarchs, so after the same model the Christian Church was to have twelve foundation-stones, and these foundations were the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. (Rev. xxi. 14.) These twelve, our Blessed LORD, according to His infinite wisdom, selected from the poor and unlearned class of His disciples, choosing rather, according to the words of to-day's Gospel, to hide the first indications of His kingdom "from the wise and prudent and reveal them unto babes." But of the holy twelve all were not worthy of their high and holy calling. Judas alone, could not forsake all to follow his LORD and Master. The taint of covetousness remained, and was cherished secretly in his heart till it resulted in his ruin, and the Apostle became the betrayer of his GOD. GOD's purposes, however, with regard to His Church could not fail. Though the instruments who were to accomplish them might fall away, yet others were not wanting to fill their place. The ministry and apostleship which belonged to Judas,¹ were, by the appointment of GOD, transferred from him to St. Matthias. Thus the twelve pillars of GOD's Church remained complete, though one who had at first been called to compose it was taken away.

The Lessons furnish us with two types from the Old Testament of this Divine substitution of the good for the bad—Matthias in the place of Judas. When the sons of Eli proved themselves utterly unworthy of the sacred office to which they had been called—that of the Jewish priesthood—the word of condemnation went forth against them. "In one

¹ Epistle, verse 17.

day they shall die, both of them. And I will raise me up a faithful priest that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind.”¹ When Shebna, the scribe of the good king Hezekiah, insulted the majesty of GOD by his pride² and luxury,³ his speedy overthrow was proclaimed through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, who was also inspired to foretell his successor in power, Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah.⁴ So also when the churches founded by the Apostles grew lukewarm or cold, they were transplanted into other nations more worthy of the blessing. That such is still the case, is a lesson which all may, this day, take occasion to learn. GOD has planted among us a holy Church, and for each member of that Church, He has prepared a place in heaven; but it rests with us whether we shall or shall not fill that place. Our privileges, as a branch of the Holy Catholic Church, may, for our sins and our faithlessness, be taken from us as a nation, and given to another people more worthy of the precious gift, as the crown prepared for each of us in heaven, may be given to another who is better than ourselves. As a Church, then, we must offer up our united prayers that GOD would preserve us from false Apostles, and that we may be ordered and guided by faithful and true pastors.⁵ As individuals we must each watch against our besetting sin, whether it be covetousness or any other temptation, lest like Judas we fall, and miss the heavenly place prepared for us. Thus the very sense of our privileges will make us “not high-minded but fear.” (Rom. xi. 20.) It will be a warning to us to “hold fast that which

¹ Morning Lesson, verses 34, 35.

² Evening Lesson, verse 16:

⁴ verse 20.

³ verse 18;

⁵ Collect.

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we have, lest another take our crown," (Rev. iii. 11,) and to remember that "whosoever thinketh he standeth must take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. x. 12.)



Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

(MARCH 25.)

For the Epistle, Isaiah, vii. *Morning Lesson*, Genesis, iii.
10. 1-16.
Gospel, St. Luke, i. 26. *Evening Lesson*, Isaiah, lii.
7-13.



HE announcement of our Blessed Saviour's Birth in the flesh is the event which we commemorate to-day.

We are called upon to consider the mystery of our LORD's Incarnation. We recall the circumstances connected with it, and we learn the lessons to be derived therefrom. Upon this great truth it is that the hopes of all mankind have rested ever since Adam's fall. Man had sinned and could not make atonement for his sin. That must be the work of GOD Himself; and the way in which this great act of Divine mercy should be accomplished was at once unfolded to the first man. "I will put enmity," GOD said to Satan, "between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."¹ Thus, from the very moment of the introduction of sin into the world, was the annunciation of a Saviour's advent made.

When, in the fulness of time, the great GOD of

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 15.

heaven and earth condescended to unite His divine with our human nature, He was born into the world "in fashion as a man," and chose a humble virgin for His Mother. In some mysterious way, which, though we cannot understand, we must devoutly believe, He Who was perfect GOD became also perfect Man—"GOD, of the substance of His Father begotten before the world, and Man of the substance of His Mother born in the world." It was to announce this great event that an angel was on this day sent to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of our LORD.¹ On this day was fulfilled that which Isaiah had foretold in the Scripture appointed for the Epistle. This prophecy was spoken by Isaiah in the time of Ahaz, under the following circumstances. GOD, seeing the people of Judah suffering from the attacks of Syria and Israel, graciously sent His prophet to comfort them in their distress by foretelling the downfall of these two powers. (Isaiah, vii. 7-10.) Ahaz, the wicked and unbelieving king, refused to give credit to his words. Isaiah, inspired by GOD, then goes on to prove the ALMIGHTY'S power, by speaking of a far higher deliverance than that of the mere Jewish nation—even the deliverance of the world by the Incarnation of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. Thus more than seven hundred years before the coming of our Blessed Saviour, are the circumstances of His Birth distinctly foretold. GOD was His Father; a virgin His Mother; Himself, in His own sacred Person, Immanuel, "GOD with us,"²—GOD and Man joined together in one Person. In His divine nature truly GOD, but partaking in His human nature of the pains and sorrows, infirmities and temptations of mankind.

¹ Gospel.² Epistle. verse 14.

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The Evening Lesson, again taking up the words of Isaiah, speaks of the joy about to come upon the earth on account of the comfort and redemption that the LORD would grant to His people.¹ While by the expressions in the eleventh verse he seems to imply what he had already foretold, that the Redeemer should be born of a pure virgin. A contrast here seems natural to be drawn between the pride, wilfulness, and disobedience of the first woman, through whom sin came into the world,² and the humility, submission, and purity of her who was the chosen channel for the entrance into the world of a Redeemer and Saviour from the consequences of that sin. The Gospel for the day relates how this was fulfilled; disclosing to us at the same time something of the character of her who was the instrument of its fulfilment. The holy person chosen to be the Mother of our LORD, was a humble virgin of the tribe of Judah. Living retired and little esteemed in the eyes of the world, she "went on her business in meekness," ignorant of the high honour which was in store for her. But GOD "reveals His mysteries unto the meek," and "is honoured of the lowly," and such were the virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her humility caused her to be troubled at the salutation of the angel, and at the glorious tidings which he brought her.³ By her belief in the miracle, which was above her understanding, she showed her faith; while her ready acquiescence that the will of GOD should be wrought in her, proved her perfect submission and obedience.⁴ Thus she who was "lowly in her own eyes," had the unspeakable honour of bringing into the world the Son of the

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 9.

² Gospel, verse 29;

³ Morning Lesson.

⁴ verse 38.

Highest, the King of GOD's spiritual Israel, of Whose kingdom there should be no end.¹ Therefore do we commemorate her, as the Church on this day bids us, amongst the glorified saints of GOD; we think of her with reverence as the instrument through which GOD accomplished His wonderful purposes to man, and to all generations we call her "blessed." (St. Luke, i. 48.)

But lest the holiness of the Mother should lead us off from contemplating the divine character of the Son, the Collect recalls our thoughts to the great subject of this day's festival. It sets before us the doctrine of the Incarnation as a truth which is to influence our practice as well as to exercise our faith. To understand this we must remember that it was to sanctify our sinful nature and unite it to His divine nature that CHRIST took upon Him our flesh. Of such a union it is the privilege of every baptized Christian to partake. Every one who has "been baptized into CHRIST has put on CHRIST." (Gal. iii. 27.) He has been made a "member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." (Eph. v. 30.) We, therefore, who have been so "joined unto the LORD," (1 Cor. vi. 17,) must strive to live in the spirit, the life which He led in the flesh. We must follow the example of our Saviour JESUS CHRIST, and be made like unto Him; as He died and rose again for us, so we who have been baptized must die unto sin and rise again unto newness of life. (Baptismal Service.) We must be crucified with Him, and "as CHRIST has suffered for us in the flesh," so should we "arm ourselves likewise with the same mind, for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." (1 St. Peter, iv. 1.) This was the meaning of the

¹ Gospel, verses 32, 33.

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Church when she signed us with the sign of the Cross, "in token that we should not hereafter be ashamed to confess the faith of CHRIST crucified, but manfully to fight under His banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil;" and it would also seem to be her meaning when she mingles the thought of CHRIST'S Cross and Passion with the doctrines of His Incarnation.

We see on this day, how this high and mysterious doctrine may be brought to influence the daily lives even of CHRIST'S youngest members. We are taught that if we would be made partakers of His divine nature, we must be ready to deny ourselves and mortify the evil habits of our own corrupt nature. We are reminded that we must "suffer with CHRIST," if we would also "reign with Him;"—we must follow Him now in His Cross and Passion, if we would benefit by His Incarnation, and attain unto the glories of His Resurrection.¹

¹ Collect.



St. Mark's Day.¹

(APRIL 25.)

Epistle, Ephesians, iv. 7. *Morning Lesson*, Isaiah, lxii. 6.
Gospel, St. John, xv. 1. *Evening Lesson*, Ezekiel, i. 1-16.

ST. MARK, the Evangelist, was the friend and companion of the Apostle St. Peter. He travelled with and attended upon him, and from his words gathered up the sacred narrative contained in the Gospel which goes by his name. This Gospel, therefore, though due to the pen of St. Mark, rests on the authority of St. Peter. He wrote it for the benefit of those Christians at Rome, who having been converted by the preaching of St. Peter, wished for some written record of the blessed truths taught them by that Apostle,—and so it has been preserved to instruct and enlighten the Church of CHRIST up to this day.

Having completed his Gospel, St. Mark travelled to Alexandria in Egypt, of which place he was the first bishop. After extending his Christian labours over several provinces in the north of Africa, he returned to Alexandria, where, about Easter, he suffered martyrdom at the hands of the idolatrous people there. Out of zeal for the false god, to whom they were at that season paying extraordinary honours, they seized St. Mark while

¹ St. Mark, the Evangelist, is often supposed to be the same as John Mark, mentioned in the Acts. As, however, the services for this day do not mention any circumstances connected with the latter, it seems more in accordance with the "Church's teaching" not to identify him with the Evangelist.

he was officiating in church, and put him to death with horrible tortures.

So few certain particulars being left on record of the life and character of St. Mark, the Church rather leads our thoughts on this day from the person of the Evangelist to the office which he performed, and the Gospel which he wrote.

Ezekiel, in the Evening Lesson, records the wonderful vision vouchsafed to him in Chaldea, and which the Church has ever applied to the evangelists of the New Testament. There they are represented as four living creatures¹ of angelic appearance yet human form; so were the evangelists men employed in angels' work. And the appearance of their faces denotes the special character of their work, whether dwelling mostly on the human or divine, the kingly or the priestly nature of CHRIST; the man, the eagle, the lion, and the ox.² St. Mark's record dwelling chiefly on the human nature of our LORD, that evangelist is here represented by the Man. This description of the work seems to follow naturally on the prophecy of the Morning Lesson, where Isaiah speaks prophetically of the workers, the blessed evangelists, calling them watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem.³ Theirs was the task to prepare the highway of the LORD, to cast out the stones of doubt and ignorance, and lift up clearly before all men the standard of the Cross.⁴ By recording the circumstances of our redemption, they have been the means of proclaiming unto the end of the world,⁵ the salvation freely offered to man. This glorious "good news," delivered unto us through the medium of the holy evangelists, is indeed a heavenly

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 5; ² verse 10.

³ Morning Lesson, verse 6; ⁴ verse 10; ⁵ verse 11.

treasure ; nevertheless, such is the ignorance and frailty of human nature, that even this precious gift may be abused. Some things there are in it, "hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction." (2 St. Peter, iii. 16.) GOD, therefore, in bestowing upon us His Gospel, has provided us also with a guide to interpret and explain it. Such a guide is His holy Church. This, it seems, is what we may gather from the services appointed for this day. While the Collect speaks of the heavenly doctrine¹ with which GOD has enlightened His Church, the Epistle points to the Church as the means and channel through which this doctrine has been preserved to us.² To frame and constitute His holy Church was our LORD's work on³ earth, during these forty days which we are now commemorating, and since His Ascension He has remained present with it, though unseen, to guide and direct it unto all truth, and preserve it in the same. He placed in it Apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of CHRIST.³ Evangelists were inspired to write the account of our Saviour's life upon earth, to record the doctrine which He taught, and tell us of the salvation which He perfected. Apostles, prophets, and teachers were appointed to gather up these sacred truths, to deliver them to us, as our LORD Himself had delivered them to the Apostles, and thus to "establish us in the truths of His holy Gospel."³ The Church, then, is to us a "witness and keeper of holy writ." She instructs her spiritual children as a mother would train and

¹ Collect. ² Epistle, verses 11, 12. ³ Collect.

instruct her child. Just as the mother would take care that the child should study the whole of any subject necessary for him to know, not allowing him to retain one part and reject another at his own pleasure—so does the Church deal with us. Looking upon all doctrines of Holy Scripture as profitable for our salvation, she would take heed that they all should be brought before us severally and in their turn. While she puts into our hands the Holy Scriptures for our study and meditation, she provides us in her creeds and services with a form of sound words to sum up and explain the doctrines which they contain; that as the heavenly truths of the Gospel were received and taught by the Apostles, so they may be received and taught amongst us by their successors even now.

The Church, thus enlightened and instructed by the holy Gospel of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, may well be compared to a Body of which CHRIST is the head¹—its members to branches of CHRIST the true Vine. Being all “perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment,” (1 Cor. i. 10,) they are all taught the same truths, they all “speak the same thing,” they all grow up together in the unity of the same faith.² To illustrate this more fully, we have but to turn to the image of the vine brought before us by our LORD, in the Gospel for the day. We know that the branches of a vine only bear fruit and thrive so long as they are joined to the tree on which they have grown, strengthened by the same root, and nourished by the same sap. So also is it with Christians. Only so long as we remain planted in the faith of GOD's holy Church, and established in the truths of His holy Gospel, can we hope to con-

¹ Epistle, verses 12, 13, 15 ;

² verse 13.

tinue faithful living members of His Blessed Son ; then we abide in Him and His words abide in us, and herein is our Father glorified, that we bear much fruit, so shall we be His disciples.¹

Having received "the truth as it is in JESUS," we are exhorted to continue in the faith, grounded and settled ; not "carried about like children with every blast of vain doctrine ;"² but by holiness of life and constancy of faith, even unto death, earnestly though silently "contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints."

We learn, then, on this day's festival, how to make a profitable use of GOD's holy Gospel, whether delivered to us by St. Mark or any other Evangelist ; as members of CHRIST's Body we must humbly and teachably study it, as it has come down to us in the Church from CHRIST our divine Head.³ As living branches of GOD's true Vine,⁴ we must "hear the Word and keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." (St. Luke, viii. 15.)

¹ Gospel, verses 7, 8.

² Epistle.

³ Collect.

⁴ Gospel.



prophets, did write, JESUS of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."¹ Again we have a proof of this tenderness for the souls of others, in his dealings with those Greeks who came up to worship at the feast. It was to St. Philip they applied for the privilege of seeing JESUS; and St. Philip, in conjunction with St. Andrew, brought them under the notice of our LORD. (St. John, xii. 20-23.) Of the other point in St. Philip's character only two instances are recorded in the gospels. The first is on the occasion of the miracle of the loaves and fishes, when he seems to have been looking more to human than to divine means, thus implying a doubt of our Saviour's miraculous power. (St. John, vi. 7.) The second is contained in the request made by him to our LORD that He would "show him the Father,"² as if he were ignorant of the truth that he "who had seen the Son had seen the Father also."³ But this weakness in the Apostle's faith only seems to have made him more especially the object of our Saviour's care. By His mild and gentle teaching, our LORD strengthened and confirmed him, and led him onwards in the right way. After the Ascension of our Saviour, he preached the word in Upper Asia, and at length suffered martyrdom at Hierapolis, a city of Asia Minor, where he was nailed to a cross, and stoned to death.

St. James, the son of Alphaeus or Cleophas, being, as is supposed, the nephew of Joseph, and so the cousin of our LORD, is called "the LORD's brother," that expression including the more distant relationship of cousins. He is surnamed "the less," or sometimes "the just," to distinguish him

¹ Second Morning Lesson, verse 45.

² Gospel, verse 8; ³ verse 9.

from St. James the great, the brother of St. John. The scene of his labours was Jerusalem, of which place he was appointed bishop the year after the Passion of our LORD. Here he presided over the council which regulated the affairs of the Church; here he lived in the constant practice of fervent piety and devotion, and here at length he died a martyr for the faith of CHRIST. The commands of the high priest that he should renounce Christianity, having made him so much the more vehement in defending and upholding it, he was by the command of that officer thrown down from the battlements of the city, and then killed by the blow of a club.

Thus did these two holy Apostles bear separate witness to the faith. Thus did they both learn to know CHRIST, and to "walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life." Let us endeavour, according to the teaching of this day's Collect, to "follow their steps."¹ Our LORD Himself has told us that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life" (St. Matthew, vii. 14); so also St. James in his Epistle teaches us, especially in that portion of it which we read to-day. He impresses upon us how many and great are a Christian's trials; but that these may be a means of advancing us in the way that leadeth to everlasting life; they may secure to us the "crown of life which the LORD hath promised to them that love Him."² GOD, Who sees that prosperity may cause a man to "fade away in his ways,"³ permits us to be tempted and tried; so tempering those temptations and trials, however, that they may not be more than we can endure, but such as will work in us the peaceable fruits of

¹ Collect.

² Epistle, verse 12;

³ verse 11.

righteousness, if only we will learn from them patience, submission, endurance, and faith.

The Lessons appointed from Isaiah and Zechariah speak of the blessing promised upon the Apostles' work in the Church. The Morning Lesson opens with the words of prophecy, appropriated to Himself by our LORD. (St. Luke, iv. 18, 19.) It then goes on to speak of the manner in which the Church, founded by CHRIST, should be built up by the Apostles and their successors, the priests and ministers of the Church.¹ It foretells the bringing in of the Gentiles to the fold of the Good Shepherd; ² a prophecy fulfilled, in the first place, by the first general council of the Church, held under the presidency of St. James at Jerusalem, where it was agreed, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to admit Gentiles into the Church, without the necessity of their first adhering to the Jewish law. Thus did the Apostles, like good gardeners, cultivate the seed of souls sown in the garden of the LORD.³

In the Evening Lesson we read of a vision vouchsafed to the prophet Zechariah with a view, in the first place, of strengthening the hands of those who were piously engaged in rebuilding the Temple of the LORD at Jerusalem. But the vision seems applicable also to those who, like St. Philip and St. James, were called to rebuild the Temple of the Law, as the Church of CHRIST. The work was to be done, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of GOD; ⁴ not by kings and armies, but by the Spirit-taught eloquence of the twelve unlearned men called by CHRIST Himself to the work.

¹ First Morning Lesson, verse 6;

² verses 6-10;

³ verse 11.

⁴ Evening Lesson, verse 6.

The seven-branched candlestick¹ may represent the Holy Catholic Church; and the two olive-trees,² the twofold nature of CHRIST, Who, as Man and GOD, made and perfected the offering necessary for the redemption of His Church. From Him flows the gift of the Holy Spirit, as the oil from the olive-trees, to sanctify the members of that Church. And the golden channels, which conveyed the golden oil from the olive-trees to the lamp, are the chosen ministers of the Church, who are appointed to convey the gifts of grace to her members; first the Apostles, appointed and ordained by CHRIST Himself, then the ministry which traces its authority to the hands of those Apostles.

Thus, according to the prophecy of old, and according to His own promise, does our LORD send His Holy Spirit, through His Church, to His people, that they may be led into all truth, that they may know Him to be "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," and stedfastly walking in the "way that leadeth to eternal life,"³ may finally attain unto the many mansions prepared for them by their Saviour in the Father's House.⁴

But neither our prayers nor watchings will avail us anything, except through Him Who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."⁵ To Him the Gospel points as our only means of entrance into the mansions prepared for us in heaven. To "know Him,"⁶ then, must be our first and only care, if we would walk safely "through the waves of this troublesome world towards the land of everlasting life." He is "the new and living Way which has been consecrated for us," (Heb. x. 20,)

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 2; ² verse 3. ³ Collect.

⁴ Gospel, verse 2; ⁵ verse 6; ⁶ verse 7.

and "no man cometh unto the Father but by Him;"¹ therefore by resting on His merits all our hope, by asking all things in His Name, and walking in the strait and narrow way which He points out, we shall know Him to be "the Way." He has sent His Spirit to guide us into all truth, (St. John, xvi. 13;) therefore, by following in all things the motions of that Blessed Spirit, we shall know Him to be "the Truth," according to His own promise, that "if any will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." (St. John, vii. 17.) He also it is through Whom GOD hath given to us eternal life, for "he that hath the Son hath life, but he that hath not the Son of GOD hath not life." (1 St. John, v. 12.) So long, then, as "He dwelleth in us," and we in Him, through the means which GOD hath given us, we may know Him to be indeed "our life."

To "know GOD," may be the privilege of each one of us, even though we have not, like St. Philip, seen Him in the flesh. Thus to know Him is the way that leadeth to everlasting life,² for "this is life eternal, that we may know Him the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST Whom He hath sent." (St. John, xvii. 3.)

¹ Gospel, verse 6.

² Collect.



St. Barnabas the Apostle.

(JUNE 11.)

For the Epistle, Acts, xi. 22. *Morning Lessons*, Deuteronomy, xxxiii. 1-12; Acts, iv. 31.

Gospel, St. John, xv. 12. *Evening Lessons*, Nahum, i.; Acts, xiv. 8.

THE very name of the Apostle whom we commemorate to-day gives us an insight into his character, for Barnabas signifies "The Son of Consolation."¹ He was, St. Luke also tells us, "a good man, full of the HOLY GHOST and of faith."² In him, therefore, were united the graces of Christian kindness, compassion, and goodness of heart. This we may gather from his history as recorded in Holy Scripture, more particularly in those passages which the Church brings under our notice this day.

St. Barnabas was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, and as such able to hold possessions which one of his tribe could not have retained in Judea. But these possessions were soon renounced for the common good. His name is foremost among those, who, in the early ages of the Church, "having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the Apostles' feet."³ Thus the first act recorded of him is one of self-sacrifice and generosity. St. Barnabas's next deed of kindness was the protection afforded to St. Paul after his conversion. The disciples feared to join themselves to one who

¹ Second Morning Lesson, verse 36. ² Epistle, verse 24.

³ Second Morning Lesson, verse 37.

had so lately been a persecutor of the Church of CHRIST. "They believed not that he was a disciple." (Acts, ix. 26.) But, convinced of the truth of his conversion, St. Barnabas took him, and so persuaded the Apostles of his sincerity, that from henceforth, "he was with them, coming in and going out at Jerusalem." (verse 28.)

The Epistle for this day tells us, how at a later period St. Barnabas was again engaged in other labours of love. Sent by the brethren to strengthen a new branch of the Church which had been settled at Antioch, he proved himself peculiarly fitted for the Christian mission. He sympathized with the new converts, rejoicing to see the work of GOD's grace amongst them; and he was the means of adding much people unto the LORD.¹ St. Barnabas ministered also to the temporal as well as the spiritual wants of his weaker brethren. When the disciples determined to send relief to the Jewish Christians who were suffering from the dearth, he, with his companion Saul, was selected for this work.² It was "when they had fulfilled their ministry," (Acts, xii. 25,) that St. Barnabas was called to the apostolic office. He was not selected as were the other Apostles by our LORD Himself, neither was he simply ordained as were his successors by apostolic authority. His appointment was the special command of the HOLY SPIRIT. We read that the HOLY GHOST said, (Acts, xiii. 2,) "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." And when they had received the outward sign of ordination, (verse 3,) he and St. Paul went forth upon the labours to which they were called. They first visited Cyprus, the native place of St. Barnabas. At Salamis, the

¹ Epistle, verses 23, 24;

² verses 29, 30.

capital of this island, they "preached the Word of GOD in the synagogues;" and at Paphos, a town of the same island, they converted the deputy Sergius Paulus to the faith, and struck Elymas the sorcerer with blindness. Antioch, in Asia Minor, was the scene of the opposition from the Jews which forced the two Apostles to declare that from henceforth they would "turn to the Gentiles." (Acts, xiii. 46.) The account of their labours and persecutions at Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra, other cities of Asia Minor, forms the subject for the second Lesson this evening. But through all their troubles, persecutions, and disappointments, the two Apostles were carried safely; for "the LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him."¹

It must have been a special trial to the gentle "Son of Consolation" to find that, though sent to "bring good tidings" and "publish peace,"² yet on all sides, quarrels and perplexities should mar the peacefulness of the Gospel. And so also it must have been a great source of encouragement when, after the first council of the Church, he was chosen, with St. Paul, to return to Antioch with the message that those of the Gentiles who were "turned to GOD" were not to be troubled, provided they observed necessary restrictions; thus causing great consolation amongst the brethren in that city.

So far, then, St. Barnabas affords us an example of Christian kindness, meekness, and charity. But here the lesson in some measure changes, and from being our example, St. Barnabas becomes our warning. Through the frailty of their nature even GOD's saints are liable to err, and their very

¹ First Evening Lesson, verse 7;

² verse 15.

virtues, except under due regulation, may prove to them an occasion of falling. So it was with St. Barnabas. In two instances he exercised his natural benevolence at the expense of Christian principle. He was yielding where he ought to have been firm. The first of these was his defence of Mark, whom he wished to retain in his company notwithstanding his former desertion and the remonstrances of St. Paul. (Acts, xv. 37-39.) The second instance of this error was his disobedience to the commands of the Church in the countenancing of Jewish prejudices. (Gal. ii. 13.) This incident in the life of the Apostle may teach us that, while like him we do good and give alms to the godly man, we must beware how we help and countenance the sinner. We must not allow any mistaken kindness or sympathy to lead us astray from what is right ourselves, or cause us to countenance sin in another.

This is the last mention which Holy Scripture makes of St. Barnabas, but we know from other writings that he continued until the day of his death a faithful and diligent Apostle of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Where he preached the gospel during that period is uncertain; but the scene of his last labours was his own native country of Cyprus. It was at Salamis, the capital of that island, that he suffered martyrdom, as it is thought, by being stoned.

Thus did Barnabas the Levite die as a priest and Apostle in the Church of CHRIST, having, in his own life, seen fulfilled most truly, in its spiritual sense, the promised blessing on the sons of Levi: "They shall teach Jacob Thy judgments, and Israel Thy law: they shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon Thine altar.

Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands."¹ In all his work he fulfilled, in a remarkable manner, the Divine precept of love given by our Blessed Saviour to His followers in the Gospel for this day. He showed his sense of GOD's love to him by the love which he bore to his brethren. GOD having chosen him and ordained him, he brought forth fruit,² which has remained even up to the present day, in the result of his conversions and the benefit of his example. But not to Apostles and holy men of old are confined the precious gifts of GOD's Holy Spirit. It is the privilege of every baptized Christian to receive GOD's manifold gifts of grace, and upon every baptized Christian rests the responsibility of rightly using and improving them. Such is the lesson which may be learned from the Collect of this day; and it is one which may apply to all of every age and station in the Church of CHRIST. Upon each one of us GOD has bestowed gifts, "differing according to the grace that is in us," and by using these gifts according to the measure in which GOD has given them, each one of us may in some degree promote GOD's honour and his neighbour's good. GOD judgeth according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not. While He expects of the rich and powerful that they shall use their alms and talents in His service, the humble sacrifice of the lowly is no less pleasing in His sight. It is in small, as well as in great things, that Christians may show their love to GOD and their brethren. Every little act of self-denial known only to GOD Himself, every little deed of kindness and sympathy and mutual assistance, even though apparently trifling, is pleasing in the sight of Him

¹ Morning Lesson, verses 10, 11. ² Gospel, verse 16

Who has said, that "a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose its reward." (St. Matthew, x. 42.) It may promote, more than we are aware, the happiness of those about us, and the glory of Almighty GOD.

Thus may even children learn to imitate the example of the holy Apostle St. Barnabas ; not only receiving GOD's good gifts, but having, in answer to their prayer, grace always to use them to His glory.¹ So may they show, by their practice as well as by their profession, that they have received an increase of that Spirit, the first-fruits of Whose gifts is love.



St. John Baptist's Day.

(JUNE 24.)

For the Epistle, Isaiah, xl. *Morning Lessons*, Malachi, i. iii. 1-7 ; St. Matthew, iii. *Gospel*, St. Luke, i. 57. *Evening Lessons*, Malachi, iv. ; St. Matthew, xiv. 1-13.

ST. JOHN the Baptist was the forerunner or messenger of our LORD. His teaching prepared men's minds for the teaching of our Saviour, as his birth foretold our Saviour's birth. The miraculous circumstances connected with the birth of the holy Baptist, as well as his subsequent holy life and violent death, are, therefore, the events which the Church brings to mind on this day.

Of the office and character of this messenger of GOD, Isaiah and Malachi had long before pro-

¹ Collect.

phesied. The former minutely describes them in that portion of Scripture appointed for this day's Epistle. This part of his prophecy, which opens with the description of the kingdom and glory of the Messiah, naturally gives an account of him who was to be His immediate forerunner; and so becomes a fit subject for our meditation on this day's festival. The prophet, in the figurative language of Holy Scripture, is here referring to a custom common amongst eastern nations, where a sovereign, visiting a distant part of his dominions, would always be preceded by some messenger whose office it was to smooth his path, level the highways, and make all things clear for his approach.¹ Such was the office of John the Baptist with regard to our Saviour. Before the "glory of the LORD was revealed"² by the manifestation of JESUS CHRIST in the flesh, the Baptist's voice sounded in the wilderness to "prepare the way of the LORD, and make straight in the desert a highway for our GOD."³ He paved the way for that new dispensation which was to replace the carnal or fleshly ordinances of the law, and to stand before GOD for ever; and he prepared the hearts of men for the remission of their sins by the preaching of repentance; therefore does he call upon Zion and Jerusalem to "lift up their voice" at these "good tidings," "saying unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!"⁴

The words of Malachi read to us both morning and evening are much to the same effect. The chapter for this morning foretells the approach of God's messenger in the midst of the corruptions and abuses which had sprung up amongst the

¹ Epistle, verse 4, &c.;³ verse 3;² verse 5;⁴ verse 9.

Jewish people.¹ That for this evening prophecies of the coming of John the Baptist, under the name of Elias or Elijah, who was his type,² and speaks of his office as the forerunner of the Sun of Righteousness. That these prophecies were literally fulfilled in the person of St. John, we learn from the writings of the New Testament, especially those portions selected for this day.

The Gospel relates his miraculous birth and the circumstances attending it. Born according to the foretelling of an angel, and, like Isaac, in the extreme old age of his parents (after they had long ceased to hope that their prayer for children could be answered), St. John was early known to be a prophet of the Most High. His father, released from his dumbness,³ is the first to declare his divine mission, and in the memorable hymn, which the Church has appointed for our daily use, proves him to be the very person of whom the prophets had spoken, as "the voice in the wilderness," the messenger of CHRIST. GOD'S kingdom, as we here learn, was at hand. The Messiah Himself was on the point of appearing to visit and redeem His people, but a way must first be opened to receive Him. The proud and rebellious heart of man, unprepared for Divine grace, would be no more fit for the presence of the Saviour, than rough and rugged ways for the reception of an earthly sovereign, therefore was John the Baptist sent to turn the hearts of "men by the preaching of repentance, that he might make ready a people prepared for the LORD." (St. Luke, i. 17.) The first Lesson for this morning shows us how he fulfilled this office. The scene of his preaching is

¹ First Morning Lesson, verse 5, &c.

² First Evening Lesson, verse 5. ³ Gospel, verses 64, 68.

here distinctly brought before us, and the means by which he worked are disclosed. He baptized "with water unto repentance."¹ By this we are to understand that repentance, or the forsaking of sin, is the only fit preparation for the reception of our Redeemer, and therefore St. John's baptism of water only, which signified the cleansing of our souls from sin, was to prepare the way for that higher baptism in which CHRIST Himself gives us a new birth unto righteousness. Thus the words which the prophet had figuratively spoken, were clearly fulfilled at the preaching of the Baptist: for the lofty looks of the proud, as mountains and hills, were then brought down, the hearts of the meek comforted and exalted, while the crooked paths of the sinner were made straight.²

In St. John, also, we see the "Elias which was for to come," (St. Matthew, xi. 14;) not the very Elias who lived in the reign of Ahab, but the Elias spoken of by Malachi,³ of whom the former was but a type. He lived in the desert, and was content with the coarsest clothing and humblest fare.⁴ He boldly rebuked the great, while he preached to others by his own life and holy example. Thus did one in "the spirit and power of Elias" literally appear, as said the prophet, to "turn the heart of the children to the fathers, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just."⁵ (See also St. Luke, i. 17.) But from preaching the truth and rebuking sin in the wilderness, the Baptist was called to suffer in prison. He was arrested by Herod, king of Judea, whom he had rebuked for

¹ Second Morning Lesson, verse 11. ² Epistle, verse 4.

³ First Evening Lesson, verse 5.

⁴ Second Morning Lesson, verse 4.

⁵ First Evening Lesson, verses 5, 6

marrying his brother Philip's wife. But even now St. John was not silenced. He still continued to deliver his divine message. Sending two of his disciples, (St. Matthew, xi. 2,) whose minds he had been duly preparing, to see with their own eyes the mighty works of CHRIST, he drew off their thoughts from himself to that One mightier than him, Who was to come after him,¹ and so he accomplished his mission. The time of his departure was at hand, and he shortly after fell a victim to the revenge and jealousy of her whose crime he had rebuked. The circumstances of this wicked deed are related to us in this evening's Lesson.

But after contemplating the office and character of the holy Baptist, the Church would instruct us in the Collect, how to benefit by his teaching, and follow his example. "Repentance, whereby we forsake sin," must still be the condition of our being joined to CHRIST, and the preparation to our receiving Him. Baptized Christians have still need daily to repent according to John's teaching; and so, by continual and sincere repentance, we can all follow his doctrine.² To copy his holy life³ may, however, seem to be a harder thing, for St. John lived in the wilderness, and rebuked the great,—we live amongst our fellow-men, and have humbler duties to perform. Yet are we not therefore exempted from carrying out the lesson taught by this prayer. The spirit of the Baptist's character may still be carried out in whatever station it may have pleased GOD to place us. In self-denying obedience and devotion to GOD we may perform our mission in the world, as he performed his in the desert. Still may we, even in the humblest sphere, be called upon to bear witness to GOD's

¹ Second Morning Lesson, verse 11.

² Collect.

truth, and to rebuke others, if not by precept, yet by silent influence and example. Even from our very childhood we influence each other for good or evil. By consenting to evil ways, or joining in them, we encourage sin in others; while by withdrawing ourselves from what is sinful, and if need be, rebuking it, we may "save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins."

May GOD give us grace, after the example of this holy saint, "constantly to speak the truth, boldly to rebuke vice, and patiently to suffer for the truth's sake."

*St. Peter's Day.*

(JUNE 29.)

For the Epistle, Acts, xii. 1. Morning Lessons, Ezekiel, iii. 4-15; St. John, xxi. 15-23.
Gospel, St. Matthew, xvi. 13. Evening Lessons, Zechariah, iii.; Acts, iv. 8-23.

 HE festival of St. Peter follows that of St. John the Baptist with a peculiar meaning. The Baptist was a type or representative of those servants of GOD who appeared before the coming of CHRIST, as St. Peter was a type or representative of the ministers and stewards of the kingdom which CHRIST came to establish. To-day, therefore, we consider the blessings of the Christian ministry, as compared with those of the law and the prophets, and we learn to realize the truth of our Saviour's words, that though "there had not risen a greater than John the Baptist, yet he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (St. Matthew, xi. 11.)

St. Peter or, according to his original Jewish name, Simon, was chosen by our LORD from among the fishermen of Bethsaida in Galilee. His brother, St. Andrew, first brought him to our LORD, (St. John, i. 41,) and he became an accepted disciple on the occasion of the miraculous draught of fishes. (St. Luke, v. 3-11.) The character of this Apostle peculiarly fitted him for the apostolic office. His boldness made him forward to declare the truth, and his zeal diligent to preach it. For this reason, as well as on account of his more advanced years, he seems to have been generally chosen to express the mind of the other Apostles. Just as in any band or society of men, one, for the sake of order and unity, is usually selected to give the general decision, so it was in the case of St. Peter. He speaks and is spoken to in the name of all the rest. The out-spoken boldness of his character caused our LORD to give him that name of Peter—the rock—by which he is best known to us. And the name was not only characteristic, but also prophetic of the power with which it pleased GOD to endue him, as of old he had endued Ezekiel. “As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead; fear them (the house of Israel) not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.”¹ How St. Peter justified this title, his history, as given in Holy Scripture, will show. Twice did he lay down the doctrine of our Blessed LORD’s Divinity. When, on the desertion of many of the disciples, our Saviour asked of the Apostles, “Will ye also go away?” it was St. Peter who said, “LORD, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life: and we believe and are

¹ First Morning Lesson, verse 9.

sure that Thou art that CHRIST, the Son of the living GOD." (St. John, vi. 68, 69.) Again, by the same confession, openly professed on another occasion, he obtained from our LORD that remarkable distinction which is recorded in the Gospel for the day. Addressing him by the name of Peter, or the rock, our Saviour promises that upon him, who had thus laid the ground-work of all religion, shall rest the privilege of building our most holy faith.¹ And so it came to pass. As to Ezekiel was given the charge of resuscitating the Jewish Church,² so to St. Peter may be ascribed the foundation of the Christian Church, both amongst Jews and Gentiles. It was St. Peter who planted the Jewish branch of CHRIST's Church, when, through his preaching and ministry on the day of Pentecost, three thousand souls were added to the faith. (Acts, ii. 41.) To him was committed the "gospel of the circumcision;" (see Gal. ii. 7;) and that he was likewise the rock on which was built the Church of the Gentiles, or of the "uncircumcision," we know from the circumstances which attended the conversion of Cornelius. Not only was Cornelius himself received into the Church through the ministry of this Apostle, but "the Gentiles also received the word of GOD," (Acts, xi. 1,) and on them "was poured out the gift of the HOLY GHOST." (Acts, x. 45.)

Before, however, St. Peter entered upon his high office and privileges as an Apostle, he showed in many instances the frailty and infirmities of a man. In the ardour of his zeal his faith failed him, and his boldness sometimes degenerated into presumption. The same earnestness, which, under Divine guidance, raised him to be chief amongst the

¹ Gospel, verse 18. ² First Morning Lesson, verse 11.

Apostles, without that guidance involved him in error. Though he was bold to walk on the water to go to JESUS, yet, beginning to sink, he feared, being "of little faith." (St. Matthew, xiv. 28-32.) Scarcely had St. Peter uttered the confession which pronounced JESUS to be the Son of GOD, than he ventured to rebuke his Master for a prophecy, which seemed to him repugnant to His nature. Our LORD answered, not St. Peter, who had spoken, but Satan, who had prompted the words. As Zechariah, of old, had seen Satan standing at the right hand of Joshua, the High Priest, to resist him,¹ so JESUS saw Satan standing by His Apostle to resist his recently made confession of faith. In the prophet's vision, "the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan:" so now did JESUS reply, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." Again, when the hour of trial was at hand, our LORD saw Satan, as Ezekiel had seen him, ready to "sift His Apostle as wheat," and He warned him of his danger. St. Peter, overconfident, declared that he was ready to go with Him both into prison and to death, but relying on his own strength he failed, and in the hour of temptation he was overcome. Thus, he, who on all occasions had been one of the chosen friends and companions of the Blessed JESUS, who had been "with Him in the Holy Mount," (2 St. Peter, i. 18,) and watched His agony in the garden, was guilty of thrice denying his LORD. His fall is, doubtless, recorded for our learning, to teach us that, if an Apostle could so err, we must, even in the midst of privileges, be "not high-minded, but fear." In the very words of St. Peter himself, written, doubtless, in the recollection of his own

¹ First Evening Lesson, verse 1.

backsliding, we learn to "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear." (1 St. Peter, i. 17.) But, if this great Apostle is a warning to us in his sin, so is he also an example in his penitence. One look from his Divine Master (St. Luke, xxii. 61) recalled him to himself, and his bitter tears showed his contrition. That repentance was fully proved by his subsequent life. St. Peter was the first of the Apostles to enter the sepulchre deserted by his risen LORD. He is the only Apostle of whom it is recorded that he saw his risen Saviour alone, without the presence of any of the others. He was the first to recognize his Master, in the early dawn, on the Lake of Gennesareth, and he cast himself into the water, that he might wade to shore and be the first to greet his GOD. As he had before boldly declared his own power to follow his Master to prison and to death, and then had miserably failed in his thrice repeated denial, so now, to the thrice asked question, "Lovest thou Me?" he durst not answer but in humility, "Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee!"¹ He remembered his weakness, he repented his rashness, he dared not boast; he would rather say, "I may fail, I have found my incapability of acting in my own strength, but still Thou knowest that I love Thee, and Thou canst give me strength to prove my love."

And then our LORD, by His words, accepted his repentance. He gave him a task whereby he might prove his love—"Feed my sheep;" and, as before He had prophesied his failure, so now He foretold his constancy by predicting for him a martyr's death.² Thus, strengthened by divine pardon, and armed with divine authority, St. Peter

¹ Second Morning Lesson, verse 17; ² verse 18.

went forth after our LORD's Ascension, to be the builder up of GOD's Church, and the pastor of His people. He took the lead in the election of the new Apostle. (Acts, i. 15.) In Jerusalem, and before the council, it was St. Peter who "opened his mouth" (Acts, iii. and iv.) to preach unto the people JESUS and the Resurrection, confirming his preaching by many wonderful miracles.¹ Rescued from the violence of the Jews, (Acts, v. 40,)² twice delivered by the hand of an angel, (Acts, v. 19,)³ St. Peter was spared to continue his unwearyed labours in the Church of CHRIST until his death. He preached the gospel in Asia Minor, resided some time at Antioch, and at length suffered martyrdom by crucifixion at Rome, under the emperor Nero. At his own request, however, he was crucified with his head downwards, esteeming himself unworthy to suffer the same death as his divine LORD and Master.

Seeing, then, how in this first and chief Apostle human frailty was combined with the highest office and commission, the services now bid us look off from the instruments by which the Church was founded to the Church herself, which they came to found. The power and authority given to St. Peter and the other Apostles, and which stood unaffected by their human frailties, still exist among us now, notwithstanding the frailty of those through whom they have descended. Though the "treasure" has been committed unto "earthen vessels," (2 Cor. iv. 7,) yet the "gifts" conveyed are still "excellent."⁴ The Church of CHRIST still rests upon the blessed truth that CHRIST is "the Son of the living GOD."⁵ The ministers of CHRIST

¹ Second Evening Lesson;

² verse 21.

³ Epistle, verse 7.

⁴ Collect.

⁵ Gospel, verse 16.

have still power to bind and to loose,¹ (see also St. Matthew, xviii. 18,) by pronouncing in GOD's Name pardon to all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe His Holy Gospel ; and still do they receive authority to "feed the Flock of GOD," "over the which the HOLY GHOST hath made them overseers." (Acts, xx. 28 ; 1 St. Peter, v. 2.) They are commissioned to preach the word of GOD which will make us "wise unto salvation," and to administer those Holy Sacraments by which CHRIST even now communicates Himself to all faithful receivers. Thus, under the Gospel ministry, the poorest and humblest Christian may enjoy privileges which even "prophets and righteous men," before the time of our LORD, desired, but could not receive. (St. Matthew, xiii. 17.) It remains for us to see that we abuse not these great privileges, but improve them as we are on this day directed to do. While we look to the Church as "the pillar and ground of the truth," (1 Tim. iii. 15,) we must "obey them which have the rule over us" (Heb. xiii. 17) in it ; knowing that they are "ambassadors for CHRIST, as though GOD did beseech us by them." (2 Cor. v. 20.) While we pray for all "Bishops and Pastors," that they may "diligently preach GOD's holy word," we must ourselves strive in all things "obediently to follow the same."²

¹ Gospel, verse 19.² Collect.

St. James the Apostle.

(JULY 25.)

For the Epistle, Acts, xi. 27, *Morning Lessons*, 2 Kings, i. 1-16; St. Luke, ix. 51-57.
Gospel, St. Matthew, xx. *Evening Lesson*, Jeremiah, xxvi. 8-16.
 20.

ST. JAMES, who is surnamed "the great," was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and brother to St. John. He and his brother, St. John, were called by our Saviour, while with their father Zebedee they were engaged in fishing on the lake of Galilee; when they immediately left the ship, and their father, and followed Him. (St. Matthew, iv. 21, 22.) The ready and zealous devotion which thus marked this Apostle's character was the feature of his after-life, and is the point which is set forth for our example on this day.

Probably the zeal and boldness with which both these Apostles taught the highest mysteries of the Christian faith, was the cause of their being surnamed "Boanerges," or "the sons of thunder." (St. Mark, iii. 17.) Even when their zeal was mistaken, and consequently reprov'd by our LORD, Holy Scripture still records it for our instruction, and the Church brings it forward for our profit. Two instances of this kind occurred. When the Samaritans refused to show hospitality to our LORD, because His face was as though He would go to their rival city Jerusalem, the fervent zeal of the two brethren naturally resented the injury done to their Divine Master;¹ they asked if they should

¹ Second Morning Lesson, verse 54.

pray that fire from heaven might fall to consume the wicked people who had done Him this dishonour. They remembered how Elijah had called fire from heaven to consume the captains and their troops who were sent to take him.¹ They knew not that the Law was now merging in the Gospel, that their Master was the Prince of Peace; they did not know of what spirit they were. Our LORD declared that He would not that any such means should be used in defence of Him Who had "not come to destroy men's lives but to save them,"² and by this declaration gently rebuked His too eager disciples. In this case, the ardour of St. James's zeal would have led him on to violence. How it led him afterwards into personal ambition, though of the highest sort, is related to us in the Gospel for the day. He had constantly attended our LORD in some of the most private retirements of His life; having been retained in His company when no one else save St. Peter and St. John was suffered to be with Him. From this, probably, the two brothers, St. James and St. John, were led to expect a place of high honour in their Master's kingdom.³ But they forgot that our LORD's kingdom is not of this world, neither are the high places of it distributed according to the rules and customs of this world. The question by which our Saviour meets the application of their mother corrects this error.⁴ By it He would explain to them that His cup or portion in this world would be the Cross; His baptism, suffering: therefore, according as they were willing to drink of this cup and partake of this baptism, so would they be nearest to Him

¹ First Morning Lesson, verses 10, 12.

² Second Morning Lesson, verse 56.

³ Gospel, verse 21; ⁴ verse 22.

in this life. What would be their portion in the next, it was not our LORD's pleasure to reveal. Sufficient it was for them to know that the places prepared in heaven by the Father, would be given by Him to those most meet to inherit them; that the way to honour is humility; and, the nearer they were to our LORD in His humiliation, the nearer would they be to Him in His glory. The two Apostles shrank not from these conditions. They had counted the cost, when, in their fervent love and zeal they had left their father, and all that they had, to follow CHRIST; and, now that the true nature of our LORD's kingdom is revealed to them, they are as willing to follow Him for spiritual as for temporal privileges,—and so they had their reward. As the prophet Jeremiah, in the portion of Scripture appointed for the First Evening Lesson, declares his willingness to suffer death rather than disavow the divine nature of his mission or the truth of his message;¹ so now the two Apostles declare their willingness to drink the cup of suffering, and to be baptized with the baptism of a martyr's death, rather than give up the discipleship of their LORD, or forfeit their claim even to a humbler place in His kingdom than they had desired for themselves. The prayer of the mother was answered, though not in the way she had anticipated. St. James, as this day's Epistle tells us, was killed by the sword of Herod,² and was thus the first Apostle who went to receive the crown of martyrdom. He entered into the place appointed for him, and inherited the kingdom prepared for him from the foundation of the world.

Such were the blessed consequences which attended the ready devotion and self-renunciation of

¹ Evening Lesson, verses 12-15.

² Epistle, verse 2.

the Apostle St. James. The Church would now bid us see how we may follow his steps.¹ All baptized Christians have received, like St. James, a call from our LORD. They have been signed with the sign of the Cross, and baptized unto His death. This is their lot and portion, the cup which they have to drink of, and the baptism with which they are baptized. For them, also, our LORD has prepared a place in heaven, in which they may reign hereafter, who suffer for Him here. It is to train us for these heavenly mansions, that our LORD, from our very childhood, lays His Cross upon us. He does so in many ways. First, He calls upon us all to forsake all worldly and carnal affections, that we may be evermore ready to follow His holy commandments.¹ What these affections are, our baptismal vow taught us when it bound us to "renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh." How they are most likely to ensnare us, it must be left to each individual Christian to determine, for the temptations which arise from them must differ according to our different ages, circumstances, and stations. Of this we may be certain, that when those things which are smooth and pleasant in this life, be they great or small, keep us back from following CHRIST, then they become to us worldly and carnal affections, which must be renounced and forsaken. The pain and struggle of so doing may be great, yet it is only a portion of that cup which is to prepare us for glory. Sometimes, also, GOD would call us closer to Himself and lead us on by a nearer way to our heavenly inheritance. Thus He may "take away the desire of our eyes with a

¹ Collect.

stroke," and bid us resign those who are nearest and dearest to us into His hands. Then we must remember the example of the Apostle St. James, who left his father and all that he had to follow CHRIST without delay. As we imitate his zealous love and ready obedience, so may we hope to share their blessed consequences. If we are ready to resign all with submission into GOD's hands, He can give us manifold more than we have forsaken in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting. (St. Luke, xviii. 30.) The same LORD Who brought us near to Him in His Cross and Passion, will also bring us near to Him in His Resurrection. He will make us to "be with Him where He is, that we may behold His glory," (St. John, xvii. 24,) and to "inherit the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world." (St. Matthew, xxv. 34.)



St. Bartholomew the Apostle.

(AUGUST 24.)

*For the Epistle, Acts, v. 12. Morning Lesson, Genesis, xxviii. 10.
Gospel, St. Luke, xxii. 24. Evening Lesson, Deuteronomy, xviii. 15.*

ST. BARTHOLOMEW was one of the twelve Apostles; and is mentioned as such by the three evangelists, St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke. Though he is not mentioned under that name by St. John, yet so generally identified with him whom that

Apostle calls Nathanael, that we may safely consider them as one and the same person.¹ When, therefore, on this day, we commemorate St. Bartholomew, we think of him as the man of whom our LORD has said, that he was "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." (St. John, i. 47.) We are taught to study his character, and watch its blessed fruits in him, that we may learn to copy it in ourselves.

"Guile," in the sense here used, signifies hypocrisy—anything connected with deceit or double-dealing; therefore, by guilelessness we may understand simplicity and purity of heart—that honesty and sincerity of purpose which prepares men's minds to receive the truths of GOD. From the very little we know of St. Bartholomew, it would seem that these qualities were conspicuous in him. When Philip first announced to him that the Messiah was come in the Person of JESUS of

¹ Though it is nowhere positively asserted that St. Bartholomew and Nathanael are the same person, yet the reasons for supposing it are such as to leave the fact almost beyond a doubt. First, St. John speaks of Nathanael as amongst the Apostles, therefore he must have been one of the Apostles mentioned by the other evangelists under a different name. Of these, seven being mentioned by St. John himself, under their usual names, could not have been the "Nathanael," of whom he elsewhere speaks. Four still remain, amongst whom we may look for one to answer to Nathanael. These are St. James, St. Matthew, St. Simon, and St. Bartholomew. Of St. James, we know that he was a near kinsman of our LORD, and therefore could not have been brought to him as a stranger, as Nathanael was. St. Matthew's other name was Levi, and if the question rests between St. Simon and St. Bartholomew, the latter, who is always mentioned with St. Philip, is much more likely than St. Simon to be the Nathanael whom Philip brought under the notice of our LORD. Besides which, the Apostle St. Simon is generally numbered amongst our Saviour's brethren.

Nazareth, he naturally doubted, because he had learnt from the Scriptures that "no good thing could come out of Nazareth," (St. John, i. 46,) and he also knew that Bethlehem was to be the birth-place of CHRIST. Yet he was not prejudiced by his own knowledge or opinion. At Philip's request, he consented to "come and see," and his search was blessed. Our LORD discloses Himself to him by giving him a token of His omnipresent power, (verse 48,) and Nathanael at once confesses Him to be the Son of GOD—the King of Israel. Our LORD then gives him a further and more convincing proof of His divinity in applying to Himself the prophetic revelation of Jacob's dream,¹ and Nathanael's faith was strengthened when he saw and heard of angels descending from and ascending to heaven, to announce the birth of the God-Man, to comfort Him in temptation and in agony, to declare the fact of the Resurrection, and to announce His final future coming again.

Such was the conversion of the Apostle Bartholomew. Found in the quiet discharge of his duty, searching the Scriptures and inquiring after truth, our LORD looked upon him when he knew it not, and marked him for His own. First, He gave him grace truly to "believe His word," and then, by the apostolic commission with which He afterwards honoured him, He enabled him to "preach" it to others also.² Accordingly, he appears, under the name of Nathanael, amongst the other Apostles who were the chosen witnesses of our LORD's Resurrection. (St. John, xxi. 2.) It is a tradition that he was one of the two who, walking to Emmaus, met the risen Saviour; and doubtless he took his part in performing those miracles by

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 12.

² Collect.

which GOD vouchsafed to confirm His word, and enlarge His Church.¹ History tells us that after the Ascension of our LORD, he preached the word in India and Armenia, and is at length supposed to have fallen a victim to the vengeance of a wicked king, many of whose subjects he had converted. He suffered martyrdom by being flayed alive, and then beheaded, or, as some suppose, crucified. Thus did the Apostle Bartholomew truly believe and preach GOD's holy word. The prayer, then, which we on this day offer up is, that the Church may love the Word which he believed, and both preach and receive the same; the lesson which we learn is, how to receive it as he received it, that we may profit by it as he profited.

Perhaps the silence of Holy Scripture may be intended to be of as much instruction as its revelations, and hence we may learn humility from the life of St. Bartholomew. Received as he had been by our LORD with words of the highest commendation, yet was he content to live his life in almost unnoticed obscurity. We know, indeed, that he did his duty as an Apostle, that he preached the Gospel of CHRIST, that he suffered for his faith; but that is all. Surely a wholesome example this to some in these days, who fancy that their whole religion must be a matter of show and display; that their chief work, is to enlighten others, while they neglect to dedicate themselves to the service of CHRIST by the study of private, unseen, unknown devotion. The Israelite without guile became the Apostle without display or hypocrisy. Even his name is an uncertainty; but his work and his death seem to stamp his character as apostolic; and by the truth and effect of his teaching

¹ Epistle, verses 12-17.

he is known, as a true prophet is to be known, by the truth of his prophecies.¹

To those who labour for the LORD in obscurity; to those whose lives are but a routine of commonplace duties, but yet who try, in them, to do GOD's service; to those who long for some active sphere in the work of CHRIST's Church, but whose duty points them to more quiet and hidden ways of serving Him; to those who wish to serve GOD in the active bustle of Martha's zeal, but who are directed by circumstances, physical or mental, outward or inward, to choose rather the quiescent, seemingly useless devotion of Mary; to such as these to-day's commemoration is a comfort, it speaks of a sanctified life, the details of which are hidden from the gaze of men. St. Bartholomew preaches to us by the example of an obscure but holy life; and our thoughts are directed to an exalted place in heaven,² prepared for the little-known Bartholomew, as much as for those other more conspicuous Apostles, whose praise is in all the Churches.

Let us, then, with this picture before us, learn ever more heartily to pray that we may receive and believe "the Word" with as true a faith and as "guileless" a devotion as Nathanael received it; and at least in the holy quietness and sanctity of our lives to preach it to others, as did the holy Apostle St. Bartholomew.³

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 22.

² Gospel, verse 30. ³ Collect.



St. Matthew the Apostle.

(SEPTEMBER 21.)

Epistle, 2 Corinthians, iv. 1. *Morning Lesson*, 1 Kings, xix.

Gospel, St. Matthew, ix. 9. ^{15.}
Evening Lesson, 1 Chronicles,
xxix. 1-20.

ST. MATTHEW was called from a very low and despised employment to be an Apostle and evangelist. He was a publican or tax-gatherer, which means that he collected the money which the Roman government exacted from the Jewish people. This trade was one which gave rise to great temptations. Those who were engaged in it, living on the profits which remained to themselves, after having paid the required sums to the government, were often guilty of great extortion and fraud. They enriched themselves at the expense of others. The office, therefore, and those employed in it, were held in great contempt amongst the Jews.

Such was the occupation of Levi the publican. Sitting on the shores of the lake of Gennesareth, he was receiving toll or custom from those who passed over the lake, when our Saviour saw him.¹ But "the LORD seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." Our Blessed Saviour, Who came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, saw in this despised publican one fitted to be His disciple. He therefore said to him,

¹ Gospel, verse 9.

"Follow Me;" and St. Matthew readily obeyed Him. He left his profitable trade, forsook his wealth, rose up, left all, and followed Him.

The call may have been prepared for in sundry previous conversations with our LORD. Levi was perhaps among the multitudes that flocked to hear the sermon on the Mount; but yet, when the call came, in the very midst of his business, it must have been both unexpected and surprising. Elisha had so been called in the midst of his ploughing¹ by the prophet Elijah under Divine inspiration. He had at once obeyed the call, lingering only to make a sacrifice to GOD and GOD's poor out of the implements he had used in his vocation.² So Levi, also, when he had risen up and obeyed the call of his Saviour, first made an offering, as it were, of his wealth, by a feast in his own house,³ to which he invited all his companions in trade or in sin, hoping, perhaps, to induce them also to join the discipleship which he had himself entered. The scene may remind us also of the manner in which David endeavoured to show his gratitude to GOD, by heaping up treasures for the building of the temple of the LORD, which should be accomplished by his son Solomon.⁴ The three pictures brought before us by this day's commemoration—the feast of Levi, the sacrifice of Elisha, the preparations of David for the temple—teach us forcibly a way of consecrating the wealth or sufficiency with which GOD has endowed us, by increasing the glory and beauty of the service of GOD upon earth, and by ministering to the wants of His people.

About two years after this first call, St. Matthew admitted to the number of the twelve Apostles,

ning Lesson, verse 19 ;
el.

² verse 21.
⁴ Evening Lesson.

and remained a witness of our Saviour's life and actions until the day of His Ascension. Still he seems ever to have kept in humble remembrance his former mode of life; and in the list of the Apostles given by him in his Gospel he is not ashamed to hand his name down to posterity as "Matthew the Publican." For about eight years after the Ascension of our Saviour, St. Matthew preached the Gospel in Judea. At the end of that time, and preparatory to beginning his labours amongst the Gentiles, he is supposed to have written the Gospel which goes by his name. After preaching in the eastern provinces of Parthia and Ethiopia, he suffered martyrdom in a town of the latter country, but in what manner is not known.

To St. Matthew we owe the first written record of the life and teaching of our Blessed Lord and Saviour. The truths of the Gospel, as handed down to us by him, are a test of his own conversion, as well as a means of leading others into the path of life. Only we must receive them as he did, if we would obtain from them a like benefit. Such is the lesson which we may gather from the words of St. Paul in the Epistle for this day, wherein he discovers to us one of the reasons why the Gospel is often preached in vain. When "the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not," then the "light of the glorious Gospel of CHRIST, Who is the image of GOD," shines not unto them.¹ The ministry of those who preach to such in all sincerity and honesty is of no avail. The Gospel is hid to them who are thus "lost."²

Now by the "god of this world" we may understand the same thing as that against which our

¹ Epistle, verse 4;

² verse 3.

Saviour has warned us under the name of "Mammon." (St. Matthew, vi. 24.) It is "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches which choke the word, so that it becometh unfruitful." (St. Mark, iv. 19.) These temptations are common to all, poor as well as rich. The rich man falls into them when he makes a god of his possessions—when he spends his time and thoughts in adding house to house, and field to field, merely for his own gratification, without regard to the glory of GOD. With his mind thus "blinded" he cannot hear the voice of the Gospel, exhorting him not to "lay up treasures upon earth where the moth and rust doth corrupt," (St. Matthew, vi. 20,) and warning him that "covetousness is idolatry." (Col. iii. 5.) But the poor man is no less liable than the rich to be led astray by the god of this world. When he enriches himself by any means which he knows to be not strictly honest in the sight of GOD, or when he sacrifices to his gains the time which GOD has consecrated to Himself, then he acts against the commands of that Gospel which has told him to "seek first the kingdom of GOD and His righteousness," (St. Matthew, vi. 33,) and to "labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." (St. John, vi. 27.)

Thus is "the love of money the root of all evil," and "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition." (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.) All this St. Matthew renounced when he embraced the Gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST and followed Him. And so must we do, if we would that "the light of the glorious Gospel of CHRIST" should "shine in our

hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST."¹ We must "forsake all covetous desires and inordinate love of riches,"² and follow the same JESUS CHRIST the Son of GOD.

We are taught, then, on this day how to make to ourselves such "friends of the mammon of unrighteousness [i.e. so to use our worldly possessions] that when we fail they may receive us into everlasting habitations;" (St. Luke, xvi. 9;) and we learn the full meaning of our Saviour's words when He said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (St. Matthew, vi. 19.)



St. Michael and All Angels.

(SEPTEMBER 29.)

For the Epistle, Revelation, Morning Lessons, Genesis,
xii. 7. xxxii. : Acts, xii. 5-18.
Gospel, St. Matthew, xviii. 1. Evening Lessons, Daniel, x.
4; Revelation, xiv. 14.

 HE holy angels form a part of the invisible creation of GOD. They stand around GOD's throne in heaven, and are ready, though unseen, to "succour and defend us on earth." It is on these heavenly beings that the Church bids

¹ Epistle, verses 4, 6.

² Collect.

us meditate to-day. The services therefore speak to us of the nature and office of the holy angels. Raising our minds from the visible to the invisible world, they gather up what Holy Scripture has revealed concerning these heavenly beings, showing how these unseen spirits have ministered, and still do "minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." (Heb. i. 14.) GOD's word teaches that angels are spiritual beings attendant on the Creator, yet of a nature superior to our own. They were created by GOD to be perfect and sinless, free from all earthly stains and temptations. Yet even these happy and blessed beings "kept not their first estate." Some amongst them, becoming rebellious and apostate, fell under the wrath of GOD, left their first habitation, and are reserved by the Almighty "in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." (St. Jude, verse 6.) Thus arose that "war in heaven" which forms the subject of the portion of Scripture appointed for this day's Epistle.¹

The war here vividly described to us may represent the contest which has ever been going on, and is still waged in GOD's kingdom, up to this day. Good and bad angels are here shown as contending together in the Church of CHRIST. The wicked spirits, with the old serpent called the devil and Satan, at their head, are fighting against St. Michael and the good and holy spirits of whom he is the chief. As they once disputed together about the body of Moses, even so it is still. Could our eyes be open to discern them, we should behold the devil and his angels seeking to devour the souls of men, good angels fighting for them, to deliver them out of the enemy's hand. This contest, which is

¹ Epistle, verse 7.

ever going on in the world of spirits, will not be ended, until the time when Satan shall be finally cast out, and all his angels with him. Meanwhile, we who are striving to "overcome by the Blood of the Lamb,"¹ have the comfortable assurance that "they be more with us than they that be against us." Such is the wonderful order in which GOD has constituted the service of angels,² that, while evil spirits are active in tempting us to sin, there are "ten thousand times ten thousand" heavenly beings before the throne of GOD ready to encamp about us and deliver us.

This truth, which we gather from the Collect, is illustrated from Holy Scripture in the other services appointed for this day. Our LORD Himself tells us in the Gospel that the little ones of His flock have angels in heaven to watch over and protect them ;³ and, from the other portions of GOD's word which we read to-day, we learn how these unseen beings have, in all ages of the Church, been employed in succouring and defending His saints. Jacob, in his wanderings and trials, was "met" by the angels of GOD.⁴ When St. Peter was fast bound in prison, it was an angel of the LORD that loosed him from his chains and set him at liberty.⁵ Sometimes our LORD Himself, under the old dispensation, vouchsafed to hold communion with man under the form of an angel. As when we read in the First Lesson for this morning, that Jacob "wrestled with a man,"⁶ it was the Divine Being Himself, the LORD JEHOVAH, Who thus communed with him and strengthened him. He it was

¹ Epistle, verse 11. ² Collect.

³ Gospel, verse 10.

⁴ First Morning Lesson, verse 1

⁵ Second Morning Lesson, verses 7, 8.

⁶ First Morning Lesson, verse 24.

also Who appeared to the prophet Daniel in that glorious form,¹ (described to us in this evening's First Lesson,) with two others, angels, attendant upon him.² Besides these few examples of the ministration of angels which the Church records this day, Holy Scripture abounds with many other instances of their appearing, and of the influence they exercise over mankind.

In relating the various facts and histories connected with GOD's Church and His saints, the word of GOD often draws aside the veil which hides the invisible world from our view, and ascribes to these heavenly messengers what commonly is said to be the result of accident or chance. Whether the circumstance recorded is for the punishment of the wicked or the welfare of the good, it is usually by the unseen hand of an angel that GOD is described as bringing it about.

The sudden pestilence which caused the deliverance of Judah and the overthrow of the Assyrians was the work of an angel. (2 Kings, xix. 35.) An angel caused the plague which was sent to bring David to a sense of his sin, (2 Sam. xxiv. 15, 16;) and to one of these heavenly beings also was intrusted the care of deterring Balaam from his wicked course. (Num. xxii. 22.) While it was an angel of the LORD that smote Herod with that loathsome disease of which he died, (Acts, xii. 23,) the healing property of the pool of Bethesda was no less the work of an angel. (St. John, v. 4.) Angels were also the peculiar attendants of the Son of GOD. As they were appointed to watch over the saints of GOD, so did they especially wait on Him Who was the King of Saints. They rejoiced at His Birth, (St. Luke, ii. 10, 13,) ministered to

¹ First Evening Lesson, verses 5, 6; ² verses 16-18.

Him in His Temptation, and in His Agony, (St. Matt. iv. 11, and St. Luke, xxii. 43,) they proclaimed His Resurrection, (St. Matt. xxviii. 5,) and hereafter will they attend upon Him, when He shall return in His glory. (St. Matt. xxv. 31.) Then will the angels of GOD be employed to carry out the dread sentence of the Judge of all the earth, to reap the harvest of all souls upon earth, to gather the clusters of the LORD's vineyard, to store the good wheat, the fruitful clusters, in the garner of Heaven, but cast the unprofitable away to be burned. (St. Matt. xiii. 41.)

Thus are these unseen beings continually employed to succour and defend the people of GOD. They are ever hurrying to and fro with messages of mercy from the courts of GOD in heaven to the abodes of men on earth. Whether men's eyes are open to discern them, or whether they are withheld from our sight, still they are ever present, ministering in the Church of CHRIST and waiting on His members. They are all around us and about us, watching us in our heavenward path, rejoicing at our repentance, (St. Luke, xv. 10,) and grieving over our falls. They assist us in the trials, and temptations, and duties of life, and are sent to comfort and sustain us in the hour of death.

The succour and defence of man form, however, as we have seen, but one part of the angels' office. As the Collect for this day teaches us, it is also their blessed and glorious employment to do GOD service in heaven. There they stand in perfect order and harmony before the throne of GOD, to praise Him and do His pleasure. (Psalm ciii. 21.) In this they afford a pattern which we on earth may humbly but earnestly aspire to copy. We, who hope one day to partake of the nature of

angels, should make it our delight even here below to imitate their heavenly tempers, and join in their holy employment ; like them, to be ever ready to praise GOD and do His pleasure ; to fulfil His commandments, and hearken unto the voice of His Word. (Psalm ciii. 20, 21.) From meditating on these holy beings, do we learn how we, even while in the flesh, may hold such communion with them, as to prepare for their constant companionship in heaven. As they tarry round about us to deliver us, (Psalm xxxiv. 7,) and have charge over us to keep us in all our ways, (Psalm xci. 11,) so let us cherish and follow their holy influences, thank GOD for them, and pray to Him to continue them to us. As they continually serve and praise GOD before His throne, so let us, their fellow-servants, strive to do His will on earth as they do it in heaven. "With angels and archangels, let us unite to praise and magnify His holy Name."



St. Luke the Evangelist.

(OCTOBER 18.)

Epistle, 2 Timothy, iv. 5. *Morning Lesson*, Isaiah, lv.
Gospel, St. Luke, x. 1. *Evening Lesson*, Ecclesiasticus, xxxviii
 1-15.

ST. LUKE, the Evangelist, whose memory we celebrate to-day, was by profession a physician. The chief facts left on record of his history are these. A Jewish proselyte of Antioch in Syria, he was brought up in all the arts, sciences, and refinements for which that city was

famed. Converted to Christianity by St. Paul during that Apostle's abode there, he became henceforth the faithful friend and disciple of the great Apostle of the Gentiles ; but it was after the separation of Paul and Barnabas, and while the former was at Troas, that St. Luke joined himself to him, to be his constant companion and fellow traveller. His Gospel, written during these travels, consequently bears the stamp of St. Paul, who probably saw and approved it, and is more particularly suited to the Gentiles, to whom St. Paul preached. The Acts of the Apostles, in which St. Luke himself, from the time of St. Paul's visit to Macedonia, appears to bear a part, was probably written at Rome after St. Paul's imprisonment. Of the great affection of this Apostle for St. Luke, many passages of his epistles testify. Writing to the Corinthians, he speaks of him as "the brother whose praise is in the gospel." (2 Cor. viii. 18.) In another place he calls him the "beloved physician," (Col. iv. 14,) and in the Epistle for this day he records his constancy in remaining with him, as opposed to the desertion of the worldly-minded Demas.¹ From this short mention of St. Luke's name, then, may be drawn a profitable lesson. Only a few short years before, the names of these two disciples were coupled together as companions of St. Paul. (Col. iv. 14.) Both had joined themselves to him to share his "afflictions, to do the work of an evangelist, to make full proof of their ministry."² Now only Luke is with him.³ Demas, having "put his hand to the plough, and looked back, is not fit for the kingdom of God." St. Luke, faithful unto death, presses on to obtain "a crown of life." He suffered martyrdom in a good

¹ Epistle, verse 10 ;² verse 5 ;³ verse 11.

old age, having spent his life in unwearied exertions amongst the Gentiles.

But it is to St. Luke's character as a physician that the services for this day would chiefly turn our thoughts. The different professions and trades out of which the Apostles and Evangelists of GOD's Church were selected are not without their spiritual meaning. As the fishermen of Galilee were taught by their trade that they were to become fishers of the souls of men, so St. Luke's former profession also taught him to transfer the power of healing from the bodies to the souls of men. "Give place to the physician," says the preacher, "for the Lord hath created him : let him not go from thee, thou hast need of him."¹ Yes—GOD has so ordained that the skill of man should be exercised for the benefit of his fellow-creatures. And GOD is pleased thus to work His miracles of healing through man's means. "Of the most High cometh healing," and yet the Holy Spirit says, through the Preacher, that "*the skill of the physician* shall lift up" the sick man's head.² So also in spiritual things ; of GOD alone cometh pardon and forgiveness and grace and strength ; yet is He pleased to convey these His good gifts through the agency of the ministry in His Church. St. Luke's calling was transferred from the ministry of the body to the ministry of the soul. From being a physician of the body, he becomes an "Evangelist and Physician of the soul"³ Instead of remedies prescribed for the healing of the body, he sets before us in his Gospel wholesome medicines for the benefit of the soul. It is he who points especially to our LORD as the great High Priest and Sacrifice

¹ Evening Lesson, verses 1. 12 ;

² verses 2, 3.

³ Collect.

through Whom we are cleansed and healed from sin. In all our Blessed Saviour's miracles of healing which are more especially recorded and dwelt upon by this Evangelist, he would set before us types of the far higher acts of healing which our Redeemer works upon our souls. He Who restored the leper and raised the paralytic can alone restore and quicken us who were dead in trespasses and sins: for "whether is it easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk?" Thus are our thoughts at once raised from all earthly helpers, to CHRIST, the great Physician and Healer of our souls. Above all Prophets, and Apostles, and Evangelists, He bestows the healing which they are commissioned to apply. He came, as we learn from His own words, "to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind." (St. Luke, iv. 18.) He has promised to "bind up that which is broken, and strengthen that which is sick." (Ezekiel, xxxiv. 16.) In the commission to the seventy disciples, of whom St. Luke was probably one, and part of which is given in the Gospel for this day, He charges them to bring peace to those who will receive them,¹ to heal the sick, and proclaim to them the glad tidings of the kingdom of GOD. (St. Luke, x. 9.) They went forth to prepare the way for the Great Physician of souls, to exhort "the wicked to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts,"² that so they might be prepared to receive the healing medicine of the gospel of peace. And so, after our LORD's Ascension, "the beloved Physician" was sent by the Spirit to the Gentiles, to a nation that he knew

¹ Gospel, verse 5.² Morning Lesson, verse 7.

not;¹ and was inspired, not only to aid the great Apostle of the Gentiles in his missionary labours, but also to keep an accurate record of his doings, for the instruction of all ages, and to write an account of our LORD's own life upon earth for the use of his Gentile converts.

The Gospel thus recorded by St. Luke, and that portion of the Holy Scriptures written by him under the name of the "Acts of the Apostles," and aptly called "the Gospel of the HOLY GHOST," are "the wholesome medicines" bequeathed to us by the Physician and Evangelist. From these we may learn the remedies for all the diseases of the soul. Whether we benefit by them or not, depends on the way in which we apply them to ourselves; for, as in temporal diseases no patient could expect to be cured who departed from the rules prescribed by the physician, so also is it in spiritual sickness. When we neglect to apply GOD's ordained remedies, we cannot expect to receive GOD's promised cure. This was the case with Demas, of whom we read this day. He shrank from the wholesome doctrines of GOD's holy word, and preferred the smooth and pleasant things of this world to the safe and narrow way which leadeth unto life, and so he fell away. That we may not be like Demas, we must strictly follow the precepts of GOD's holy gospel, even though the world should tell us they are hard sayings, and persuade us to "walk no more in them." We must never neglect His ordinances, even though the voice of His Church through them should call us one way, and our worldly interests another. Whatever may be said by the world, or by the thoughtless and careless children of this world, we,

¹ Morning Lesson, verse 5.

St. Simon and St. Jude, Apostles. 419

as Christians, are assured that these things are wholesome medicines ordered for the benefit of our souls. We know that, though they may cost us a sacrifice, yet they will afterwards "yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby."

If thus, like St. Luke, we continue steadfast unto death, following at all cost the wholesome medicines of the doctrines which he taught, we may humbly trust that our prayer this day will be answered, that "all the diseases of our souls will be healed."¹ The great Physician of mankind will look down from heaven, and have compassion upon us. He Who "sees our ways" will heal us. (Isaiah, lvii. 18.) He will "heal our backslidings, and love us freely." (Hosea, xiv. 4.)



St. Simon and St. Jude, Apostles.

(OCTOBER 28.)

Epistle, St. Jude, i.

Morning Lesson, Isaiah,
xxviii. 9-17.

Gospel, St. John, xv. 17.

Evening Lesson, Jeremiah,
iii. 12-19.

E are now drawing to the close of the Church's year, and have arrived at the last of those festivals sacred to the memory of CHRIST's holy Apostles. On this day, then, we sum up as a whole, the teaching which these festivals have severally brought before us; we remember the benefits which are to be derived from those who were the pillars or foundation-stones of

¹ Collect.

the Church of CHRIST, and we learn to do our part towards rightly using and improving them.

The Church of CHRIST, the Zion of GOD, no longer, like the Temple of old, sanctified only by the presence of the ark of the covenant and its Shechinah cloud,¹ but with CHRIST Himself as the "precious corner stone,"² is built, as the Collect for this day reminds us, "upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets." They delivered to men the doctrine which He came to teach, "precept upon precept; line upon line; here a little, and there a little;"³ and so, by degrees, they built up that Church upon earth which He came to found. But, while CHRIST and His Apostles thus form the chief part of this Divine building, we His members, as lively stones of that spiritual house, have to "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to GOD through JESUS CHRIST." (1 St. Peter, ii. 5.) Upon us it devolves to remain joined together in the unity of the Spirit, to live in the bond of love, and to contend for the purity of the faith.

The two Apostles, St. Simon and St. Jude, whose memories now remain to be celebrated, seem peculiarly calculated to teach us this lesson. They were brothers, thus seeming to form a literal fulfilment of the words of Jeremiah, "I will take two of a family and bring them to Zion."⁴ They were also reckoned amongst the brethren of our LORD, (St. Matt. xiii. 55,) being, perhaps, the sons of Alphæus or Cleophas, the brother of Joseph, and hence cousins of our LORD. The characteristic of both was a religious zeal.

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 16.

² Morning Lesson, verse 16;

³ verse 13.

⁴ Evening Lesson, verse 14.

St. Simon's surname of Zelotes, or the Canaanite,¹ shows that he belonged before his conversion to the Jewish sect of the zealots. This sect was remarkable for the fierce and extraordinary ardour with which they defended their law. Whether this ardent spirit was conspicuous in St. Simon's after-life, as a Christian, we know not; but, from his having belonged to this sect, we may conclude that zeal was a peculiar feature in his disposition. The Gospels make no further mention of him than simply to number him amongst the brethren of our LORD; neither does history tell us much that is certain of his apostolic labours. The general supposition is, that, after preaching in Egypt and in the northern provinces of Africa, he joined St. Jude in Persia, where both suffered persecution at the hands of the Magi, and both together received the crown of martyrdom.

St. Jude is likewise mentioned in St. Matthew's Gospel (xiii. 55) amongst the brethren of our LORD, and is perhaps identical with the writer of the Epistle of St. Jude, as seems to be implied by the selection of a portion of that book for the Epistle of the day. He appears also to have been known under the names of Labbæus and Thaddeus. After the Ascension, the principal scene of his labours, previous to his martyrdom in Persia, is thought to have been Mesopotamia. But the chief notice which Holy Scripture takes of St. Jude, is the record of that question (St. John, xiv. 22) which he put to our Saviour, and which forms a

¹ The word Canaanite does not signify an inhabitant of Canaan, for which a different Greek word would have been used. It would have been better, perhaps, had it been spelt Kananite, as it comes from a Syriac word Kanean, or Kanenish, by which the Jewish faction of the zealots was designated.

part of the conversation recorded in the Gospel for the day. Our Saviour had been promising to the disciples the special manifestations of His presence, (verses 20, 21,) and St. Jude, not yet understanding the spiritual nature of our Redeemer's kingdom, asks how He will manifest Himself unto them, and not unto the world. Our Blessed LORD then takes occasion to speak to them of the hidden workings of His Spirit in the hearts of His faithful servants. The Spirit of GOD, as He here tells them, manifests Himself in the hearts of those who love Him and keep His commandments; (verse 23;) He Who dwells in the whole Church of CHRIST as in a temple lives and moves in each one of His members separately, in proportion as they love and obey Him. He leads them into all truth, and discloses to them the deep things of GOD. While the "world" (verse 17) and the "natural man" can neither know them nor discern them, the Spirit of GOD enables us "to know the things that are freely given to us of GOD." (1 Cor. ii. 12.) It was this Holy Spirit, dwelling in the hearts of the Apostles, which supported them against the hatred and persecution of the world.¹ The Blessed Comforter abiding amongst them enabled them to bear witness to the truth,² built them up in the unity of the Spirit, and bound them together in the bands of love. Such is the sure and solid foundation of the Church of CHRIST.

With us it remains to cherish these blessed privileges, and continue in that holy doctrine and fellowship; and this is what the services for this day would teach us to do. In the Epistle, St. Jude exhorts us to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints."³ Many

¹ Gospel, verse 20; ² verse 27. ³ Epistle, verse 3.

now, as in the days of St. Jude, may "creep in"¹ to endeavour to turn us away from the purity of the faith, as it was delivered to us by CHRIST and His Apostles. But to them we must give no heed. The truths of CHRIST, as taught us in His holy word and delivered to us through His Church, must be our only rule, and, if any man bring any other doctrine, we must neither receive him ourselves nor encourage those who do.

But, whilst we contend earnestly for the unity and purity of CHRIST's holy Church, we, His members, must not forget to contribute to it ourselves. GOD has indeed promised that we should be His temple, but then, if we would that He should "dwell in us and walk in us," we have to separate ourselves from what is evil, and "touch not the unclean thing." (See 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17.) Warned by the example of the people of Israel, who, having been once saved, were afterwards destroyed because they believed not;² of the angels who kept not their first estate;³ and of Sodom and Gomorrah who gave themselves over to wickedness,⁴ let us take heed that we turn not aside from the holy commandment delivered to us, lest we bring dishonour upon that spiritual temple to which we belong. Rather, "building up ourselves on our most holy faith," and "praying in the HOLY GHOST," should we "keep ourselves in the love of GOD, looking for the mercy of our LORD JESUS CHRIST unto eternal life." (St. Jude, 20-22.)

In this the saints of GOD in all ages may be our pattern, and the word of GOD our guide. With the holy Apostles—"the pastors according to GOD's

¹ Epistle, verse 4 ;

² verse 6 ;

³ verse 5 ;

⁴ verse 7.

own heart" ¹—whom we commemorate this day, let us, then, learn to increase our zeal, and quicken our devotion in the things of GOD, that we may each one in our lives and conversations preserve the unity of the spirit, and uphold the purity of the faith.

If thus we learn to love GOD and keep His commandments, GOD will disclose Himself to us more and more. Our Saviour will come unto us, and make His abode with us (see St. John, xiv. 22-25); and we, being thus fitly framed and builded together for an habitation of GOD through the Spirit, may hope to "grow unto an holy temple in the LORD, acceptable to GOD through JESUS CHRIST." ² (See also Eph. ii. 20-22.)



All Saint's Day.

(NOVEMBER 1.)

<i>For the Epistle</i> , Revelation, vii. 2.	<i>Morning Lessons</i> , Wisdom, iii. 1-10; Hebrews, xi. 33, and xii. 1-7.
<i>Gospel</i> , St. Matthew, v. 1.	<i>Evening Lessons</i> , Wisdom, v. 1-17; Revelation, xix. 1-17.

WE, the members of CHRIST'S Church, militant on earth, unite on this day to celebrate the memories of our fellow members triumphant in heaven. Raising our thoughts to the "city of the living GOD, the heavenly Jerusalem," we call to mind all those holy souls, who, redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb, are there waiting for their final consummation and bliss in the kingdom of glory. Not only, therefore, as on other saints'

¹ Evening Lesson, verse 15.

² Collect.

days, do we remember Apostles, Evangelists, or Martyrs, but we commemorate every just spirit which has been made perfect in the faith of CHRIST, from righteous Abel even unto this day. We praise GOD for the holiness which He has wrought in them, and we pray for grace to follow their good examples.

The Collect teaches us to consider the members of CHRIST, whether triumphant in heaven or still militant on earth, as one great body. Elected or called into His Church, they have all been joined or knit together in one communion and fellowship.¹ Joined to the same Head, they have been made partakers of the same privileges, redeemed by the same Blood, strengthened by the same grace, and made heirs together of the same hopes of glory. Temporal death, therefore, can have no power to dissolve this holy fellowship. The members of CHRIST who have been removed from our sight by death still remain true and living members of His mystical body; only they have reached the point which conceals them from our view. Their trials are over, and they are safe in the world of spirits, in the presence of their Divine Head. There they hold communion with us, and we on earth with them. Like a great cloud of witnesses they encompass us about to encourage us in our heavenward path; we remember their virtues and strive to follow in their steps. This is the blessed company which was seen by the beloved disciple in the portion of his divine Revelation which is selected as this day's Epistle. From it none are excluded who are found marked with the mark of CHRIST, and sealed with His Blood. Those who have embraced and kept the faith, out of every tribe of

¹ Collect.

Israel¹—from every people and nation under heaven²—all meet to sing one triumphant song of praise to GOD, Who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. There they stand before His throne, with palms in their hands to mark their victory; their white robes denoting their innocence and purity from sin. The souls of the righteous in this happy state are safe in “the hand of GOD, and there shall no torment touch them.”³ Even when the destroying angel of GOD is sent forth to execute His judgments, he will not be allowed to hurt those who have the seal of GOD sealed in their foreheads.⁴

But, in the Second Lesson for this evening, St. John would still more vividly describe the happiness of these glorified spirits. As earthly figures are the only means by which we, who are in the flesh, can be made to look into the “unspeakable joys”⁵ of heaven, their state of pure and holy rejoicing is here represented by the similitude of a marriage feast.⁶ The Church, as a bride, is going forth to meet her LORD. Her members are all adorned with that garment of innocence and holiness with which He has clothed them.⁷ They follow “The Word of GOD”⁸ in His glory, as they followed Him in His humiliation. All are glad and rejoice, and a voice of a great multitude as of many waters, is heard shouting Alleluia.⁹ Such is the blessedness of the dead who die in the LORD. (Rev. xiv. 13.) Well may Solomon describe the death of the righteous in the words read to us in this morning’s Lesson: for, to those who have such

¹ Epistle, verses 5-9;

² First Morning Lesson, verse 1.

³ Collect.

⁴ Second Evening Lesson, verses 7-10;

⁵ verses 8, 14;

⁶ verse 13;

⁷ verse 9.

⁸ Epistle, verse 3.

⁹ verse 6.

blessed hopes in store, death can be but a gain. It is only "in the sight of the unwise," that such seem to die. Though their departure may be taken for misery, and their going from us to be utter destruction, yet we know that they are in peace, and that their hope is full of immortality.¹

But, if we would learn by what paths those holy souls entered into their rest, we must turn to the Second Lesson for this morning, and there we shall see that it was oftentimes through "much tribulation that they entered into the kingdom of GOD." As our Blessed Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST "went not up to joy but first He suffered pain," (Visitation of the sick,)² so neither can His servants; therefore do we read of the sufferings and afflictions of the saints of GOD in all ages, and we learn how they "resisted unto blood, striving against sin."³ Supported and comforted by the blessed hope of immortality, they showed great boldness in the sight of them that afflicted them, so that their persecutors were troubled with terrible fear, being "amazed at the strangeness of their salvation."⁴ But they are "numbered with the children of GOD, and their lot is among the saints." "They live for evermore. Their reward also is with the LORD." "They receive a glorious kingdom and a beautiful crown from the LORD'S Hand."⁵

But it is not enough idly to contemplate the victory and happiness of our fellow members triumphant in heaven. We, who are still militant on earth, have to press forward towards the prize of our high calling; and, if we would attain unto it as

¹ First Morning Lesson, verses 2-4.

² Second Morning Lesson, (Heb. xii.) verse 2;

³ verse 4.

⁴ First Evening Lesson, verses 1, 2;

⁵ verses 5, 15, 16.

they attained, we must tread the path which they have trod. GOD, Who has a care for all His elect, and would bring "many sons unto glory," has provided for each one of us, as He did for them, a crown in heaven. Though He may lead us to it by different ways, yet the same end is in the view of all, and the same rules may serve for all. Like the saints who have gone before, we must continue "faithful unto death," (Rev. ii. 10,) serving GOD cheerfully through that particular measure of trial, temptation, or suffering, which He sees fit to deal out to us. From their history and example, also, we may learn the fleeting nature of all things here below; and considering these things but as "shadows that pass by," and our life as that which must soon "draw to an end,"¹ look rather to the "inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us." Cleansed and purified by the Blood of CHRIST, and sanctified by His Spirit, we must, like them, take up our cross, and fight manfully against every "sin which doth so easily beset us."² "Looking unto JESUS, the Author and Finisher of our faith,"³ we must ascend with Him into the Holy Mount,⁴ and there learn from His own lips what were the graces which shone conspicuous in His saints, that we may "go and do likewise." Step by step, we must here learn how to add grace to grace, and virtue to virtue. To poverty of spirit, and mourning for sin,⁵ we must add meekness, gentleness, and peaceableness to men. Then, looking upwards to the things of GOD, we must "purify ourselves, even as He is pure;" and so hunger and thirst

¹ First Evening Lesson, verses 9, 13.

² Second Morning Lesson (Heb. xii.) verse 1;

³ verse 2.

⁴ Gospel;

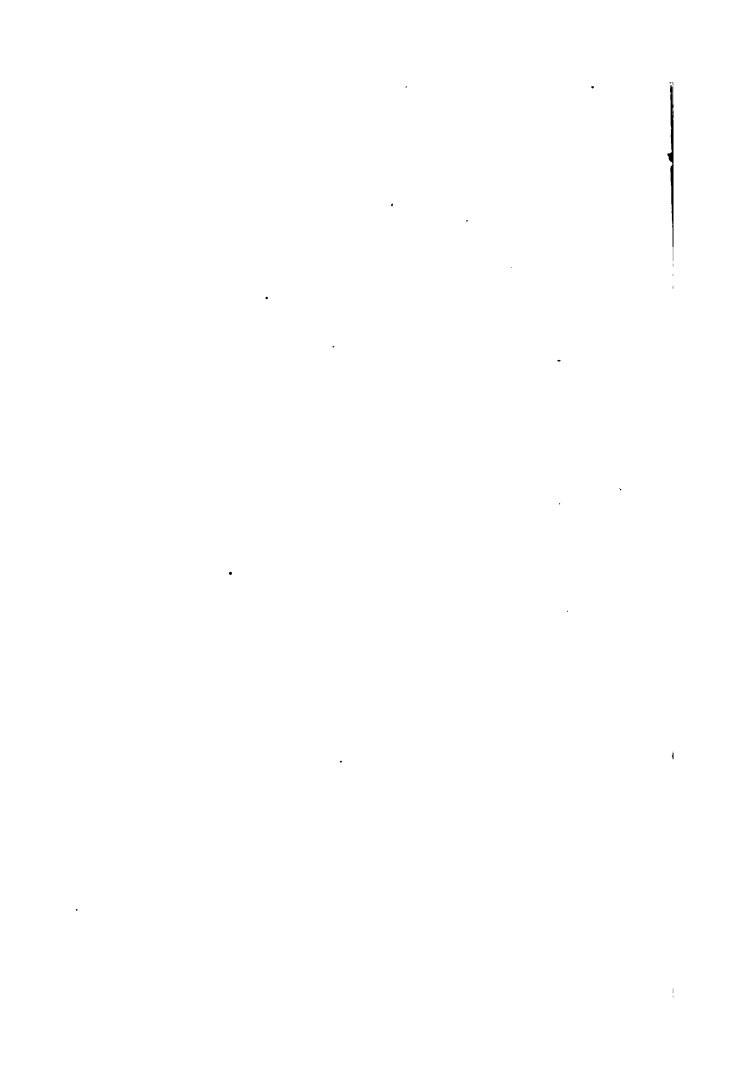
⁵ verses 3, 4.

after His righteousness here,¹ that we may be fit to be with Him where He is, hereafter. With all the prophets² and righteous men, who have gone before, we must be ready to rejoice, when we are "counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name;" knowing that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Rom. viii. 18.)

Such are the heavenly tempers which form the blessedness of the saints on earth, and are the beginning of that blessedness which will be perfected in heaven. May we, then, be enabled so to "follow GOD's blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living," that with them "we may come to those unspeakable joys which GOD has prepared for them that unfeignedly love Him."³

¹ Gospel, verses 8, 10; ² verse 12. ³ Collect.

THE END.



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